

Royal Decrees appoint advisors to King

AMMAN (Petra) — A Royal Decree was issued Saturday appointing HRH Prince Talal Ben Mohammad as His Majesty King Abdullah's advisor for national security affairs, in addition to his current post as rapporteur of the State Security Council. Another decree was issued appointing Abdullah Baha'eddin Touqan as King Abdullah's advisor for scientific affairs and deputy rapporteur of the State Security Council. According to the decrees, effective as of Feb. 2, both Prince Talal and Touqan will enjoy the rank and salary of a minister. A third decree was issued yesterday appointing Faisal Akef Fayz as chief of Royal Protocol at the Royal Court as of March 3.

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More than 200,000 pilgrims now in S. Arabia for Haj

RIYADH (R) — Saudi Arabia said on Saturday that more than 200,000 Muslims from all over the world had already arrived in the kingdom to perform the annual Haj pilgrimage. The official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) quoted the head of the passport department as saying that a total of 202,430 pilgrims arrived by air, 3,055 by sea and others by land. About two million Muslims perform the Haj pilgrimage, a pillar of the Islamic faith, every year. The pilgrimage falls this year later in March.

Kidnapped children freed in Sierra Leone

FREETOWN (R) — Rebels in Sierra Leone have released around 30 abducted children, as they promised to do during talks by radio with religious leaders during the week. A senior churchman said on Saturday. "The rebels have just released the 30 children they promised to release as a sign of goodwill that they are sincere about holding talks with the Sierra Leone government to end the war," a Sierra Leone Council of Churches official told Reuters. The government was encouraged by news of the release.

India, Pakistan agree to free detainees

NEW DELHI (R) — Arch-rivals India and Pakistan have agreed to release a batch of civilian prisoners and fishermen from each other's custody within a month, the United News of India (UNI) said on Saturday. UNI said India would release 43 Pakistani prisoners and 26 fishermen while Pakistan would free 18 Indian prisoners and 109 fishermen under an agreement reached between the two countries. It said the decisions were taken during two days of talks between officials of the home ministries of the two countries which ended in Islamabad on Saturday.

Azerbaijan says former CIA agent advised on plot

MOSCOW (AP) — The government of Azerbaijan claimed Saturday that a former CIA agent was involved in a plot to assassinate ex-President Abulfaz Elchibey. Authorities last year accused former parliament speaker Rasul Guliyev of plotting the assassination, and the national security ministry now claims that he hired the former agent as an advisor. Russian and Azerbaijani news agencies reported. The ministry identified the American as Brian Branson, and said he was a "former department head of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)," the Inter-Tass report said. In Washington, CIA spokesman Mark Mansfield said the agency had no comment on the reports.

'Mexican president orders probe of governor'

MEXICO CITY (APF) — President Ernesto Zedillo has called for a probe of allegations Tabasco State Governor Roberto Madrazo may be linked to a tax evasion scheme involving up to \$20 million. La Jornada newspaper reported Saturday. Zedillo reportedly issued an order Jan. 14 to investigate the charges against Madrazo, a potential presidential candidate for the ruling party. The Tabasco government allegedly seized tax receipts generated by some 63,000 state workers and illegally used the funds to fuel Madrazo's political aspirations, the paper reported.

Bahrain in mourning over loss of Emir Isa Ben Khalifeh

MANAMA (R) — The emir of the Gulf Arab state of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh, was buried in Manama on Saturday in a low-key funeral hours after he died of a heart attack.

His eldest son and heir apparent, Crown Prince Hamad, 49, was sworn in as the new emir of the small, oil rich island, in a smooth transition of power.

Thousands of people, including Sheikh Isa's family and government officials, crowded Rifa cemetery and surrounding streets as the coffin, draped in a blue cloth, was taken from an ambulance into the cemetery.

Women in black wailed in grief outside the cemetery during the brief burial ceremony, which took place after the Muslim dusk prayer in accordance with Islamic tradition.

Leaders and officials from fellow Gulf Arab states, where Sheikh Isa was mourned, were expected to head to Bahrain on Sunday to offer their condolences.

The official Gulf News Agency (GNA), in an announcement mourning the emir, said the 66-year-old Sheikh Isa died of "a sudden heart attack."

The emir, who led Bahrain to independence from Britain in 1971, presided over the island's prosperity and navigated it through local and regional tensions.

A Bahraini official told Reuters Sheikh Isa died shortly after he met visiting Defence Secretary William Cohen, who is on a Gulf



File photo dated Oct. 30, 1998 of Bahraini Emir Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh attending the opening ceremony of the 14th Gulf Cup Championship in Manama. The emir died of natural causes yesterday (AFP photo)

and Middle East tour.

A news conference by Cohen at Bahrain airport was cancelled as word of the emir's death broke.

A U.S. military official, who asked not to be identified, said the emir apparently died after Cohen had left the palace en route to Saudi Arabia.

Bahrain declared a three-month mourning period and ordered government ministries and institutions closed for five days.

Sheikh Isa came to the throne in 1961 after having served as crown prince from 1958.

Bahrain state radio said Sheikh Hamad informed the cabinet at an emergency meeting of his father's death and told them he

King to lead delegation to Bahrain to offer condolences

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday expressed his deep sorrow and that of the Jordanian people over the death of Bahrain Emir Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh.

A Royal Court announcement said: "His Majesty King Abdullah Ben Al Hussein mourns with deep grief the passing of the emir of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa Ben Salman Al Khalifeh."

King Abdullah will lead a high-level delegation to Bahrain today to offer condolences to the Bahraini government.

King Abdullah expressed the grief of the Hashemite family and that of the Jordanian people and government to the Al Khalifeh family and the Bahraini government and people over the passing of one of the leaders of the Arab Nation who dedicated his life to serving his country and nation.

The late emir was known for

his efforts to end differences among Arab states and to unify the ranks of the Arab Nation.

King Abdullah recalled with deep appreciation the honourable stand of the late emir towards Jordan and the Arab World at large.

The Cabinet Saturday issued a communiqué declaring a seven-day mourning period in Jordan during which flags will fly at half-mast.

Prime Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh expressed deep grief over the passing of Sheikh Khalifeh. In a statement to the press, Rawabdeh said the late emir had been a great friend of the late King Hussein and was one of the great leaders of the Arab Nation. He said the Jordanian people share the sorrow of the ruling family of Bahrain and that of the Bahraini people over their great loss.

The prime minister said Jordan's satellite channel will be linked with Bahrain's satellite channel.

In more than 37 years as ruler of Bahrain, Sheikh Isa presided over an economic diversification programme that turned the island state into a major Middle Eastern financial centre.

Bahrain was the first Gulf state to find oil in commercial quantities, in the early 1930s, but it never became a major oil exporter and what reserves it has are dwindling.

Sheikh Isa and his government decided the island's future prosperity could only be assured by transforming the economy.

declared himself the new emir under the constitution. Sheikh Hamad, named crown prince in 1964, was sworn in before the cabinet, the radio said.

Sheikh Hamad was the driving force behind building up Bahrain's armed forces in 1968 and still holds the title of commander-in-chief.

Bahrain state television interrupted its normal programmes to broadcast readings from the Holy Koran — a traditional ritual on the death of a high ranking official.

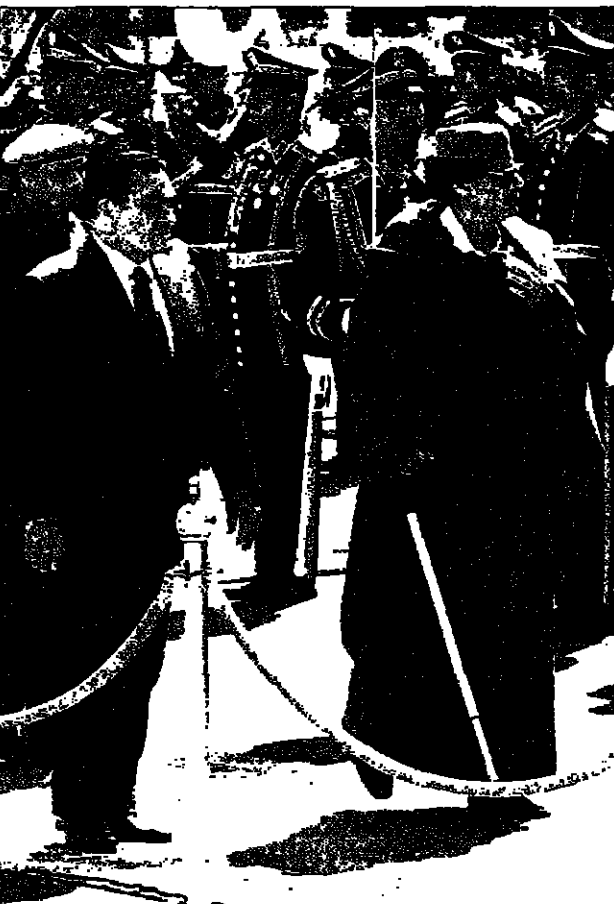
signs from both sides." Musa said Libya received a clarifying letter from U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan on arrangements for the handover of the suspects — Al Amin Khalifa Fahima and Abdul Basset Al Megrabi.

"Things are moving and we hope the matter will be finalised in the near future," Musa said. "Egypt wants a solution to this issue and the lifting of sanctions on Libya."

Sanctions, including a ban on flights to and from Libya, would be suspended when the men are flown to the Netherlands.

Qadhafi asked the Libyan people to trust South African President Nelson Mandela and Saudi Arabian officials who "asked us to accept" provisions for the handover of the two Libyans.

The United States and Britain gave Tripoli an informal 30-day deadline on Feb. 26 to surrender the pair.



Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak escorts Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi past a honour guard at Khbba Palace in Cairo on Saturday (AP photo)

Qadhafi, Mubarak discuss Lockerbie case in Cairo

CAIRO (R) — Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak discussed developments in the Lockerbie impasse Saturday in a tent pitched on the presidential palace lawn.

"Certainly, the Lockerbie affair imposed itself," Egyptian Information Minister Safwat Sherif told reporters after the 45-minute closed-door meeting. "They reviewed the latest contacts and efforts."

"The two leaders also discussed Arab causes, including the Iraq crisis and the Middle East peace process, and bilateral issues," Sherif said.

Qadhafi would hold a news conference at the end of his talks with Mubarak Monday, he said. The Libyan leader is due to leave Egypt Friday.

Presidential sources said the two leaders were due to continue talks at 6 p.m. (1600 GMT) at Imbadiya Palace.

The U.N. Security Council imposed sanctions on Libya in 1992 for failing to hand over

two Libyans accused of planting a bomb on a Pan Am airliner that exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in December 1988, killing 270 people.

Qadhafi said Tuesday that "a final agreement is expected" on a U.S.-British plan under which the suspects would be tried under Scottish law in the Netherlands.

Qadhafi, who is using a crutch since he broke his hip last year, stayed the night at an undisclosed location in the desert after coming across the border in a cavalcade of some 200 vehicles Friday.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said in Malta Friday he expected a solution "within the next few weeks" to the lengthy conflict pitting Libya against Britain and the United States.

"There are great prospects for optimism in this question," Musa said at the end of a two-day European-Mediterranean foreign ministers' meeting in Valletta. "There are positive

forced the attacking aircraft to flee. In Washington, a U.S. military spokesman said U.S. planes struck three sites in Iraq's southern no-fly zone after a coalition aircraft were threatened by Iraqi missiles.

The bombing came days after Turkey's President Suleyman Demirel criticised U.S. strike damage to an Iraqi pipeline carrying crude oil to the Turkish port of Ceyhan.

Although NATO-member Turkey hosts the U.S. planes that patrol and regularly bomb neighbouring northern Iraq, it has expressed uneasiness over long-term U.S. goals in the region.

The U.S. military spokesman said

strikes began after planes patrolling Iraq's northern no-fly zone observed Iraqi anti-aircraft positions firing at them.

A Reuters correspondent travelling in a refuelling aircraft from the airbase said plumes of smoke were visible above snow-capped mountains inside Iraq's border after the strikes.

"What it seems has been happening in the last few days is Iraqis have been changing their positions," a U.S. air force commander at Incirlik airbase told Reuters.

Both Britain and the United States earlier this week expanded the list of targets their pilots are authorised to strike, but insisted there was no change in policy.



His Majesty King Abdullah receives the deputy higher commander of the UAE armed forces, Sheikh Sultan Ben Khalifeh Ben Zayed for a meeting on Saturday (Petra photo)

King meets with UAE military official, IAEA chief

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday received the deputy higher commander of the UAE armed forces, Sheikh Sultan Ben Khalifeh Ben Zayed, for talks on bilateral issues.

During the meeting, Sheikh Sultan, who delivered greetings from UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ben Sultan Al Nahayan and Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Khalifeh Ben Zayed Al Nahayan to King Abdullah, stressed his country's desire to boost bilateral relations in all fields.

King Abdullah expressed deep appreciation for the gesture and for Sheikh Zayed's encouragement of investment in Jordan's development projects and facilitation of joint invest-

ment. King Abdullah sent his greetings to Sheikh Zayed and Sheikh Khalifeh and wished further progress and prosperity to the people of the UAE.

Earlier, Sheikh Sultan, accompanied by a delegation comprising Minister of Economy and Trade Sheikh Fahem Ben Sultan Qasemi, Central Bank Governor Sultan Nasser Sweidi and the vice president of Abu Dhabi's Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said he will hold talks with Jordanian officials on the possibility of establishing a joint company.

Minister of Trade and Industry Mohammad Asfour and Central Bank Governor Ziad Fariz attended the meeting.

Also yesterday, King Abdullah met the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mohammad Bardai, for talks on joint relations.

During the meeting, the King stressed Jordan's policy on the elimination of atomic and mass destruction weapons from the region and praised the agency's role in limiting such arms.

Bardai expressed appreciation for the Kingdom's cooperation with the agency in scientific, health and agricultural fields.

He briefed the King on the agency's mission and activities in Iraq.

Foreign Minister Abdul Ilah Khalaf and Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Suleiman Abu Alim attended the meeting.

Reaffirming that his government will go to Parliament during its current session for a vote of confidence, Rawabdeh said: "That is a constitutional obligation and the government has no choice."

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Marwan Hmoud, the first deputy prime minister, heads the ministerial committee that will prepare the government's statement to the House.

The government also formed the following committees: a higher committee to follow up on Gulf War compensation claims, headed by the prime minister; a higher committee for water, headed by Rawabdeh; a committee for administrative affairs, led by Deputy Prime Minister Marwan Hmoud; committees for development affairs, privatisation, developing the northern coast of Aqaba, and monitoring the privatisation process of Royal Jordanian, all of which are led by Deputy Prime Minister Rima Khalaf; a ministerial committee for the Pan-Arab Games led by Deputy Prime Minister Ayman Majali; and a legal committee led by Minister of Justice Hamzeh Hadad.

"We have to go to the field in order to determine exactly the actual needs of the people," the prime minister said.

Rawabdeh said water topped the priorities of his government and said he hoped that "within the coming two weeks we will overcome the water crisis."

He said his government will also immediately address administrative procedures in order to ease bureaucracy. Rawabdeh also said his administration will facilitate domestic and foreign investment.

"Investors should only apply to one department and an official response should not take more than

three weeks," he said.

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Palestinian lawmaker Hanan Ashrawi is pushed back by Israeli police and army during a scuffle in the West Bank town of Al Ram on Saturday (Reuters photo)

Palestinian women scuffle with Israeli police in Jerusalem

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A Palestinian woman was arrested here Saturday in scuffles with Israeli police at a road block during a demonstration to mark International Women's Day, which falls Monday, witnesses said.

The police broke up the protest by about 150 women, who included former Palestinian negotiator Hanan Ashrawi. The demonstrators held a banner addressed to the Israeli authorities reading: "Free our husbands and our sons." Israel is currently

holding about 3,000 Palestinian prisoners in its jails. "This demonstration is also aimed at showing that Jerusalem is the capital of the independent Palestinian state," one of the participants, Faiza Abu Al Heija, said.

Iraqi paper slams Gulf states on Cohen tour

BAGHDAD (R) — An official Iraqi newspaper criticised Arab Gulf states Saturday over Defence Secretary William Cohen's tour to drum up regional support for air attacks in no-fly zones over Iraq.

The Jewish and Zionist American Defence Secretary Cohen announces that he is expanding aggression against an Arab and Muslim country, Iraq, while he is freely roaming the land of Arabs and Muslims," the official newspaper Al Qadisiya said.

"He is being received with open arms by the rulers of Saudi Arabia and others to discuss with them America's hostile strategy against Iraq," The Iraqi News Agency

INA quoted President Saddam Hussein as accusing the United States and Britain of committing an "aggression against Iraq since December 1998" as the two countries' planes attack air defences in north and south of the country. Washington and London launched four-day extensive air raids against Iraq in

New emir of Bahrain, an experienced army commander

MANAMA (R) — Sheikh Hamad Bin Isa Al Khalifa, who succeeded his father who died on Saturday, has built a well-trained army in Bahrain despite the Gulf Arab island's limited financial resources and small population.

Crown prince since 1964, Sheikh Hamad was defence minister and then commander of Bahrain's national guard before the creation of an army force after the island gained independence in 1971 from Britain.

He is committed to the alliance with five other Gulf Arab states grouped together under the Gulf Cooperation Council.

"We are a part of our Arab Gulf and we do not outpace our brothers and brethren.

We will not be lagging behind any steps they take. Our present is one and our future is one, and we are bound by joint security and defence pacts," Sheikh Hamad said in an interview in 1996.

Born on January 28, 1950, Sheikh Hamad was officially appointed crown prince of the small country of 580,000 in 1964. Bahrain's armed forces — under the command of Sheikh Hamad — joined an international alliance led by the United States to help drive Iraqi forces out of Kuwait in 1991.

But other than that Bahrain's 8,000-strong army has never been engaged in a war. Even when Qatari troops landed

on a small disputed small Gulf island in 1986, Saudi Arabia stepped in to defuse the crisis.

Bahrain and Qatar are locked in a long-standing border dispute over small but potentially oil-rich islands, including Hawar island, located near Qatar's northwestern coast and are controlled by Bahrain since 1930s.

Sheikh Hamad studied in Bahrain and abroad and became a qualified helicopter pilot in 1978.

He had been a permanent member of the Helicopter Club of the Great Britain.

He speaks good English, rides well and water-skis, used to play basketball and football with his soldiers and is fond of tennis and

falconry.

Sheikh Hamad is the eldest son of the late emir, Sheikh Isa. He has three sons, the eldest is Sheikh Salman who was appointed deputy defence minister in 1995, Abdullah and Khalifa and two daughters.

He appears committed to the policies which his deceased father had pursued during 37 years in office.

"It is difficult to go unilateral with frameworks and courses strange to our society whatever the circumstances. On this basis, the course of shura (consultative council) is the one now prevailing in the Gulf Cooperation Council," Sheikh Hamad said in the 1996 interview.

UNDP to help promote human rights in Iran

TEHRAN (R) — The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is to sponsor academic activities in Iran to help raise awareness on human rights, the official Iranian news agency IRNA reported.

Michael Von Der Shulenburg, head of the U.N. office in Tehran, and Mohammad Reza Takhsid, the dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science at Tehran University, signed

agreements on this on Saturday, the agency said. The projects, which include introduction of specialised graduate courses on human rights, "seek to promote human rights in Iran by international standards."

There will also be other activities, such as work-

shops and research and field studies, IRNA said.

It will be the first time such courses are taught in an Iranian university, and come as Iran's moderate President Mohammad Khatami pushes to open up society and implement democratic reforms.

"The U.N. welcomes the spirit of cooperation the Iranian government is showing. We hope the project will increasingly bring Iran into the global discussion of human rights," Shulenburg was quoted as saying.

Western countries have long accused the Islamic republic of human rights abuses, charges which Iran rejects as politically motivated.

Iran has also been insisting that Western notions of human rights are incompatible with

Islamic teachings, which the country has strictly followed since its 1979 revolution.

But there has been growing debate here on the subject of human rights since Khatami's election 21 months ago.

For the first time since the revolution, a police security chief and 10 of his men are to stand trial in May on charges of torturing prisoners.

During a visit to Tehran in December 1997, United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan delivered a ground-breaking speech on human rights at Tehran University.

Last year, U.N. High Commissioner on Human Rights Mary Robinson also travelled to Iran to attend a regional workshop on human rights.

Ibrahimi arrives in Tehran

TEHRAN (AFP) — U.N. special envoy for Afghanistan Lakhdar Brahimi arrived here Saturday to discuss the situation in Iran's war-torn neighbour with Iranian officials, the official IRNA news agency said.

During his five-day stay, Ibrahimi is also scheduled to hold talks with a visiting delegation from the 54-member Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) headed by OIC chief Izzeddin Laraki, who arrived here Friday.

Ibrahimi's visit to Iran, a harsh critic of the Taleban, comes following an agreement between the Sunni Muslim militia and Afghan opposition forces to hold peace talks in Turkmenistan next week.

The U.N. special envoy announced in Islamabad Thursday that the Taleban and its rivals had agreed to hold peace talks in Ashkhabad on March 10.

Ibrahimi said the Ashkhabad conference offered the "last chance" for the two sides to arrive at a peaceful settlement.

Ibrahimi acknowledged he did not succeed in persuading the Taleban to agree to the formation of a broad-based government of national reconciliation. But he voiced the hope that Afghanistan's neighbours would be able to convince the warring factions to see reason and arrive at a settlement.

On his arrival here, Ibrahimi told reporters that aim of his visit is to discuss the "continuation of cooperation for the settlement of the Afghan issue" with Iranian officials.

Qatar scores two 'firsts' with local elections

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar will score two "firsts" for the conservative Arab Gulf monarchies on Monday when it holds local elections with women taking part as both voters and candidates.

The peninsula state has been festooned with banners, portraits of candidates and posters for the election which will set up a single municipal council.

Six women, most of them university academics, are among almost 340 candidates running for seats in the 29-member council, which will

have a four-year mandate.

With 18 as the minimum voting age, the electorate numbers almost 22,000 — including 9,665 women — out of a total population of 522,000 of whom only an estimated 100,000 are Qatari nationals.

Members of the armed forces and police are not on the electoral roll and cannot run for office.

Parliamentary delegations from a dozen Arab and other countries have been invited to supervise the elections, including Faezeh Hashemi, an Iranian MP and daughter of for-

mer President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani.

"The fact that Qatari women are taking part is an important step toward participation in political life," she told reporters in Doha.

Officially, the municipal council's role will be to "supervise implementation of laws and resolutions concerning the ministry of municipal and agricultural affairs."

But the council's recommendations can only be submitted to the cabinet with the approval of the ministry itself. Several candidates fear that

the council will have its hands tied and too limited a role, especially as the gas-rich emirate does not have a parliament.

"I wish it could be backed up by an elected parliament, to which it could turn in case of conflict with the executive branch," said Abdullah Mulla Zine Al Mulla, a senior official of Qatar's central bank.

The emir, Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa Al Thani, announced on Nov. 16 a decision to appoint a committee of experts to draw up a permanent constitution which would

provide for a directly-elected parliament.

Despite the limitations, rival candidates in the municipal contest have promised to open creches, clubs for the elderly and skating rinks, or even to build new homes for voters.

Mulla called on electors to rally behind the women candidates "to ensure the success of this experiment in democracy." But psychology professor at Qatar university and candidate Muza Al Malki insisted that voters be more discerning.

"I refuse to be elected just because I'm a woman," she said.

The women candidates have been active in electoral evenings held in tents in the presence of men, an unprecedented event for a country where the sexes are segregated.

But segregation will be strictly enforced during the vote, with separate booths for men and women as well as separate entrances to polling stations, said Colonel Abdullah Al Kabissi, who is in charge of security.

Oman is the only other Gulf Arab state to have given

women the vote or the right to run as candidate, although on a limited basis in a consultative council set up in October.

Kuwait alone has a parliament but women are not allowed to vote.

Among the 29 conscriptions in Qatar's municipal election are Zubara and the Hawar islands at the centre of a territorial dispute with Bahrain in which the world court in The Hague is acting as arbitrator.

"Not to have done so would have implied they don't belong to Qatar," explained Mulla.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 4773111-19
PROGRAMME TWO

19:10News headlines
19:35Doc - Perspective
20:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)
20:30 Programme on the late His Majesty King Hussein
21:00 Islamic History in Jordan
21:30On the Banks of Jordan
22:00News in English
22:10 Doc. - National Geographic
23:00 News in Arabic (Channel 2 links up with channel 1)

PRAYER TIMES

04:36Fajr
05:53(Sunrise) Dhuha
11:47Dhuhr
15:06Asr
17:41Maghrib
18:57Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweith, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel.
4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel.
4622366
Anglican Church Tel.
4624834/4624811
St. Athem Syrian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4771751
Amman International Church
Tel. 5865897
German-speaking Evangelical

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church
in Amman Tel. 5811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter
Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la
Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel.
4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel.
4646138
Church of Presentation, Sweith
Tel. 5920146
The United Catholic Church
Tel. 4624757

The English-Language
Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel.
4892679
The Baptist Church Tel.
4628052
The Armenian Catholic
Church Tel. 4771331
The Armenian Orthodox
Church Tel. 4775261

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department
of Meteorology

Warm weather conditions will
prevail during the day becoming
cool at night and winds
southeasterly moderate. In
Aqaba, winds will be northerly
moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman10/23
Aqaba14/30
Deserts07/25
Jordan Valley13/30

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 22 Aqaba 29. Humidity
readings: Amman 23 per cent,
Aqaba 20 per cent.

Following are the temperatures
expected today in the following
areas:

Ajloun08/19
Jerash09/24
Uin Qays10/20
Madaba07/22
Petra07/22
Dead Sea15/28

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Bassam Karadseh4389200
Dr. Khalid Masri5661144
Dr. Salman Daboubi5812568
Dr. Rami Mazzawi489488

AMMAN:
Firas Pharmacy5661912
Al Salam Pharmacy 4636730
Mayadah Pharmacy5537004
Ruko Al Dawa Pharmacy 5536169

IRBID:
Dr. Ghazi Ta'ameh(02)250080
Fou'ad Pharmacy(02)275360

ZARQA:
Dr. Isma'il Tallawi(05)903469
Palestine Pharmacy(05)983562

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre4637111
Civil Defence Department5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue
.....4630341
Civil Defence Emergency199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade4617101
Blood Bank4775121
Highway Police5343402
Traffic Police4896390
Public Security Dept.4630321
Hotel Complaints5605800
Price Complaints5661176
Waste & Sewage Complaints4897487
Amman Municipality Complaints
.....7871111
Telephone Information (directory
assistance)121
Overseas Calls0132
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs4623101
Abdoli Tel. Repairs5661101
Jordan Television4773111
Radio Jordan4774111
Water Authority5680100
J. Electricity Authority 5815615
Electric Power Co.4636381
RJ Flight Information, 44-53200

Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special
Surgery5921199
The Islamic, Abdoli5666131/7
Hussein Medical Centre5856856
Luzmila4630195
Khalidi Maternity4644281/6
Akhil Maternity464241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity4642362
Malhas, J. Amman4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani5607071
Shmeisani Hospital5607431
Jordan Hospital5607550
University Hospital5353444
Al-Munasher Hospital 566722/9
Al-Ahli, Abdoli5664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 4771101/3
Al-Bashir4775111/26
Army, Marka4891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital5157100
Amal Hospital5607155
Al Amal Cancer Centre5353000

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital(09)986731
Al Hikma Modern Hospital(09)990990

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital(02)275555
Roman Catholic Hospital(02)272275

Ibn Al Nafees Hospital(02) 7101372, (02) 7103101
Rosary Sisters Hospital(02) 7102831, (02) 7102101
Specialty Hospital(02) 7103100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital(03)2014111

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by
Royal Jordanian (RJ) information
department at the Queen Alia
International Airport Tel.
(44)53200 where it should always
be verified. Information on other
flights is obtained on telephone
(44) 52700 or (44) 523250. Information on Royal Wings flights can
be supplied on phone 4875201-5

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
08:25Bombay (RJ)
08:35Jeddah (RJ)
08:50Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)

09:00Beirut (RJ)
09:50Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
16:45New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:45London (RJ)
18:05Athens (RJ)
18:25Madrid, Geneva (RJ)
18:30Brussels (add) (RJ)
19:25Rome (RJ)
21:05Paris, London (RJ)
21:45Frankfurt, Brussels (RJ)
22:55Vienna, Aqaba (RJ)
23:59Jeddah (add) (RJ)
04:15Cairo (add) (RJ)
04:30Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights

14:35Istanbul (TK)
18:00Dubai, Damascus (EK)
18:40Beirut (ME)
18:45Kiev (6U)
19:05Paris (AF)
20:25Tel Aviv (LY)
20:40Cairo (MS)
23:30London, Beirut (BA)
23:35Amsterdam (KL)
23:55Lamaca (CY)
00:55Bucharest (RO)
02:00Rome (AZ)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

07:50 Aqaba (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
10:30 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)
16:00 Aqaba (arriving at Marka
Airport) (RW)
18:45 Tel Aviv (arriving at QAIA)
(RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:00Aqaba, Paris (add) (RJ)
05:20Beirut (RJ)
09:35Frankfurt (RJ)
10:50Aqaba, Vienna (RJ)
11:25Tunis, Casablanca (RJ)
11:30Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
12:15London (RJ)
12:15Athens (RJ)
19:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:30Jeddah (RJ)
20:35New Delhi (RJ)
21:00Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:45Damascus (RJ)
22:45Sanaa (RJ)
23:00Jeddah (add) (RJ)
23:30Bangkok (RJ)
00:35Cairo (RJ)
00:10 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights

07:10Frankfurt (LH)
15:35Istanbul (TK)
19:00Dubai (EK)
19:40Kiev (6U)
20:00Beirut (ME)
21:10Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40Cairo (MS)
00:35Amsterdam (KL)
01:55Bucharest (RO)
03:00Rome (AZ)
07:15Beirut, London (BA)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights

08:15 Tel Aviv (arriving from
QAIA) (RW)
08:30 Aqaba (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
16:30 Tel Aviv (from Marka Air-
port) (RW)
20:30Aqaba (from QAIA) (RW)



Her Majesty Queen Noor Saturday received Sheikh Sultan Ben Khalifah Al Nahayan, Abu Dhabi's royal court chief, at Bab Al Salam. Queen Noor expressed the deep appreciation of His Majesty the late King Hussein for Sheikh Zayed's concern, support and care for the King while he underwent treatment at the Mayo Clinic. Sheikh Sultan said Sheikh Zayed has asked that they extend their visit to Jordan in order to develop and strengthen ties between the two countries, particularly in the economic and trade fields. Sheikh Sultan, a graduate of Sandhurst Military Academy, inquired about Crown Prince Hamzah and his progress at Sandhurst. Also attending the meeting were Minister of Industry and Trade Sheikh Fahim Ben Sultan Al Qasbi, Governor of the Central Bank Sultan Ben Nasser Al Suweidi, the first representative of Abu Dhabi's Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sa'id Jaber Al Suweidi and United Arab Emirates' Ambassador Ahmad Al Zubi.

News in brief

King receives IAAE official

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Abdullah on Saturday received Suleiman Abu Uleim Director General of the International Agency for Atomic Energy (IAAE) Mohammed Baradi and discussed with him means of evading the region dangers of mass-destruction weapons. On the other hand, Abu Uleim and Baradi also discussed scopes of cooperation between the ministry and the IAAE. Also attending the meeting was the ministry's Secretary General Ahmad Bashir.

Prisoner treatment workshop for PSD

AMMAN (Petra) — Deputising for Public Security Department (PSD) General Nasoub Muhieddin Director of the Rehabilitation and Reform Centres at the PSD Sami Majali attended a workshop on treating prisoners in accordance with Jordanian law and the Constitution and in conformity with international standards. The workshop was also attended by Fahd Haddad, the International Red Crescent representative in Jordan.

Arab fund manager arrives

AMMAN (Petra) — General Manager of the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development Abdul Latif Al Hamad arrived Saturday on a three-day official visit during which he will hold talks with senior Jordanian officials. He was received at the Queen Alia International Airport by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning Rima Khalaf and Central Bank of Jordan Governor Ziyad Fariz.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

• "The Fan" at Books at Café, Jabal Amman on Tuesday March 9 at 8:30 p.m. (Tel. 4650457/8).

LECTURES

• "The Antiquities of Ghor Al Safi" by Khalil Hamdan at the Friends of Archaeology Centre on Monday, March 8 at 6:30 p.m. (Telephone: 5930682).
• "The Arab Intellectual and the Inevitability of Globalisation" by Dr. Al Taher Labib of Tunisia at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman on Monday March 8 at 6:30 p.m.
• Lecture by Mahmoud Rimawi about his experience in writing (in Arabic) at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh on Sunday March 7 at 6:00 p.m.

NES students protest against tuition hike

By Dana Charkasi

AMMAN — Scores of students at the Amman New English School staged a brief strike on Saturday to dissuade management from raising tuition fees across the board, witnesses said.

Students spoke of plans to raise fees for all classes as of the next scholastic year (1999-2000). They said kindergarten fees would be increased by around JD200 a year while increases for secondary classes ranged from JD300-JD 500.

Top school managers declined any comment on the strike. "There is nothing going on [no strike] at our school," said Ophelia Bshouri, headmistress of the school's elementary section.

Asked about the planned increase, Bshouri said, "I don't want to give figures of the school fees as they are not for publication in a newspaper."

However, one teacher told the Jordan Times she believed the administration had to raise the fees to cover expenses of "highly-qualified foreign and local teachers" and other running costs to enable the school maintain a certain academic standard.

Students said they staged a spontaneous strike minutes after management broke the news of the planned fee increases in official letters addressed to their parents.

"They distributed these papers in all classes, but those who staged the strike were mostly ninth, tenth, eleventh and twelfth graders," said one student.

"We staged a spontaneous strike and refused to enter our classrooms at the end of the first break," said another female student.

"We started whistling, shouting, clapping our hands and tearing the letters handed to us in a sign of protest. Then we quickly calmed down and decided to continue our protest silently."

Education Ministry officials were not immediately available for comment. Zeid, whose two brothers attend high school, said fees will be increased from around JD1,300 to JD1,800 for each as of next year.

"A slight increase would be normal and acceptable, but we can't take such a dramatic increase of fees," he added.

"Not all families are able to pay JD1,800 for their children's school education," Zeid said.

"This is even more than the JD1,200 I pay a year to continue my university education," he added.

The school's 1992 decision to raise fees sparked similar tension that eased after administration promised to shelve the plan for a while.

"The situation was eased by a promise from the school administration not to raise the fees for the coming three years," said one parent. "But in 1995, fees were increased."

Mayor defends GAM's cultural centre

'I assure all citizens that the GAM's revenues are properly spent'

By Susan Resheq

AMMAN — Despite harmful criticism of some writers on the Greater Amman Municipality's (GAM) financial scheme to aid cultural and educational activities, the municipality continued working on the project of the King Hussein Cultural Centre.

"Everybody has the freedom to express his opinion, but we think that supporting such activities to improve the cultural and educational level in Jordan is something very necessary," Amman Municipality Mayor Nidal Hadid told the Jordan Times.

"On the 26th of May, His Majesty King Hussein laid the cornerstone for the cultural centre, the GAM decided to name the centre after him, in the remembrance of his achievements and interest in all aspects of life, especially cultural ones," Hadid said.

The purpose of the JD7 million project, now being constructed on a 12-dunum area, is "to serve the general and primary idea of developing and upgrading the surrounding area of Ras Al Ain with all cultural, social and entertainment aspects in order to encourage artistic and cultural capabilities," Hadid said.

The King Hussein Cultural Centre, in its four floors is due to include two multipurpose auditoriums with a capacity of 600 and 200 seats, lecture halls, show-rooms, libraries, a theatre, a graded hall which could seat 250 people and small workshops.

According to the centre's plan, the scheme will also include a children development skills centre, cafeterias, commercial shops, administration offices, parking lot and a reception hall.

Recently, many writers criticised the GAM's spending on various cultural and educational activities and construction of 'fancy' buildings.

For example, Fahd Fanek, an Al Ra'i columnist, noted that almost all Jordanian municipalities suffer from poverty, heavy debts and financial deficit.

Fanek said the total revenue of some of those municipalities are not enough to pay their debts or wages or simply to provide basic services.

Meanwhile, the GAM has a financial surplus due to a large number of taxpayers, one-third of whom are migrants [from other municipalities] who have deprived their own municipalities from income, said Fanek.

Money is spent extravagantly on fancy buildings, and publishing costly magazines, which are of no interest but to those who write in them, Fanek claimed.

Fanek urged that Amman municipality's revenues be redistributed to help other municipalities carry out their basic duties, and to help the Jordanian countryside, which suffers from poverty and unemployment.

Some columnists criticised their colleagues for claiming that the GAM "spends lots of money" on many activities in the capital, saying that it is vital to improve and develop Amman's cultural and educational fields in order to ensure the country's prosperity.

"With all confidence, we say that Amman today is the most important city, as it is an Arab-Islamic centre which faces the international enemy that has occupied other holy parts of the nation," said Hani Saudi in an article which was published in one of the local newspapers.

Hadid said, "we know most of other municipalities suffer from financial problems that in turn cannot aid the cultural movement in Jordan."

"I think that cooperation between municipalities is of vital importance in promoting Jordan's cultural life," Hadid added.

Hadid explained that "the GAM has allocated the amount of JD260,000 from its JD63-65 million budget for 1999 to aid the cultural movement."

"One of the municipality council's members criticised us as he thought the amount was meagre," Hadid said.

He said, "the municipality is working on improving services to the city's residents. For example, we are working on planting trees on road sides, street lighting and supplying citizens with public gardens."

"We have also many plans concerning pollution, including a comprehensive planning study for Amman," the mayor said.

"We are also not limited to cultural activities. We also support Jordanian athletics and aid many local sport clubs with land and provide other forms of assistance to Jordanian athletes," Hadid said.

"We are wrongly accused, and we are making great efforts to help other governments and municipalities, but we do not mention everything we do," Hadid said.

Hadid claimed that the GAM has no financial surplus in its budget, but "the reason for GAM's progress in its achievements and financial budget is the municipality's successful departments, workers and various sources of the GAM's financial income."

"I would like to assure these local columnists and all citizens that the GAM's financial revenues and the expenditure are properly spent," Hadid said.

AMMAN — The government is expected to submit its policy statement soon to the Lower House to win Parliament confidence before the 80-member chamber recesses, a lawmaker said Saturday.

Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee Ghalib Zou'bi said no request for a vote of confidence had been received, but noted that the proposed session is expected to convene before the end of this month.

According to the Constitution, the government should request a vote of confidence from the Parliament within 30 days from its formation.

The current parliamentary session is expected to recess before March 27, although there are expectations in some quarters that the session will be extended if the government fails to prepare its policy statement within 30 days, Zou'bi said.

His Majesty King Abdullah last Thursday designated veteran politician Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh as prime minister, ordering him to form a new cabinet to replace Faysal Tarawneh's 24-man team.

"I can say for sure that the government will demand a special session to allow deputies to discuss its statement and I think the request will be submitted soon," the lawmaker told the Jordan Times.

"The statement will be the framework to identify Rawabdeh's policy which we will try carefully," the lawmaker added.

In his designation letter, the King asked the 60-year-old premier to concentrate on economic issues, strengthen Jordan's ties with Arab states and steer the Kingdom's relations with Israel.

Zou'bi said the government's policy statement is expected to differ from the designation letter, "but it will draw on the guidelines from the 20-point letter he received from the King."

Rawabdeh, who is also a member in the 80-member Lower House, is expected to win a vast majority of votes during the confidence vote due to his good relations with most Parliament members, Zou'bi added.

The deputy indicated that Rawabdeh might submit his resignation from Parliament following his appointment, but said the Parliament is expected to turn down such a request if submitted.

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Rawabdeh visits Lower, Upper Houses

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prime Minister Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh Saturday pledged to maintain close cooperation with the judicial and legislative authorities, saying the government will work closely with them and enhance their independence.

During a visit to the Palace of Justice Rawabdeh told the President of the Judicial Council and Head of the Court of Cassation Taher Hikmat that the new government is committed to implementing the directives of His Majesty King Abdullah contained in the letter of designation. He said his visit was to emphasise the government's respect of the judicial authority's independence.

In the third article of his 20-point letter of designation King Abdullah said, "We take pride in our Jordanian judiciary, its independence and its performance. We call for supporting the judiciary through developing a law to ensure its independence and to improve the working conditions of the judges."

The government is ready to provide all means to help modernise legislation pertaining to the development of the work of the judiciary and will accept proposals from the judiciary in line with the King's letter to the government, stressed Rawabdeh.

The Prime Minister was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Marwan Hmoud as well as the ministers of planning and justice and other officials.

Hikmat outlined the judicial authority's new plans for modernisation and development and the training programmes for the judges.

The prime minister called at the Lower House of Parliament where he met House Speaker Abdul Hadi Majali and pledged to maintain close cooperation with the legislative authority.

Majali expressed appreciation of Rawabdeh's visit, saying Parliament will exert all efforts to work hand in hand with the government in the enactment of laws. Rawabdeh also called at the Senate, where he met with its president, Zeid Rifai. He stressed that the government will pursue all efforts to promote cooperation with the executive authority to enable it to perform its duty.

Weight-obsessed males and females may risk suffering eating disorders

By Rana Awwad

AMMAN — Males and females, especially teenagers, obsessed with weight watching, run the risk of suffering from serious eating disorders, including anorexia nervosa and bulimia, or both.

Their risk is further aggravated by changes that are mainly promoted by Western media that advocate the idea that slim is beautiful or promote the image of a wafer-thin look, doctors said.

And women generally suffer from eating disorders 10 times more than men, while such illnesses usually occur in young females in their early teens.

Doctors warn that excessive dieting may lead to malnutrition and, in serious cases, death.

"In Jordan, where access to media promoting such attitudes is available to most people, more and more young girls are reported to suffer from eating disorders," said Hamed Takroui Nutrition Professor in

'Proper dieting should become a way of life, not merely a transient period targeting a special occasion'

—Aline Nashef, dietician

the Food and Technology Department at the University of Jordan.

"When teenagers see these slim attractive figures on TV they try to imitate them, and even some youngsters with normal body weight start to imagine themselves as fat," he told the Jordan Times.

The desire to be slim contrasts sharply with conventional attitudes in Jordan and in nearby states several years ago — if not decades — that a woman should have a full and rounded figure with a face as round as a moon, he added.

"There has been a shift in perception of beauty over the years."

However, doctors said anorexia nervosa and bulimia are more frequent in societies which appreciate slim individuals.

In the United States alone, there are over seven million patients who are trying to conform to the "wafer-thin image."

Anorexia nervosa is medically defined as a self-starvation disorder where the individual, usually a female, loses 15 per cent of her normal body weight through non-stop dieting. Usual patterns see overweight people following a diet and unintentionally continuing the process even after they reach their target weight because they continue to view themselves as fat.

In self-induced starvation, patients engage in harmful eating habits such as dividing their food into tiny portions and weighing each item before eating. Others stop eating altogether and others take slimming pills to keep their weight low while exercising frantically.

Medical studies show that anorexic patients may at a later stage develop symptoms of bulimia — another disorder where the sufferer is trapped in a vicious cycle of binge eating and purging.

Unlike anorexics, bulimics have normal body weight which they struggle to maintain by eating massive amounts of food in a very short time; but to rid

themselves of feelings of guilt, they resort to self-induced vomiting, prolonged fasting, violent exercise or taking laxatives.

"Anorexic patients have a distorted body image of themselves which they persistently try to fix," said Walid Sarhan, a consultant psychiatrist and director general of Al Rashid Hospital For Psychiatry.

"They are never satisfied with the amount of weight they lose, and no matter what others tell them, they go to such extremes in dieting to the extent that some are admitted to hospitals in very serious condition," he added.

Sarhan said one of the extreme cases he treated was a female patient who was around 1.60 centimetres high and weighed less than 30 kilograms.

Doctors warn about the consequences of intolerable starvation such as broken sleep, constipation, bones that are easily broken, depression and a constant feeling of being cold due

to a lack of fat storage in the body. Vomiting, on the other hand, will cause irregular heartbeats, kidney damage, muscle weakness and a dissolution of the enamel on the teeth because of the stomach acid, they added.

Laxatives, they said, take their toll on bulimic patients, causing persistent stomach pain, swollen fingers and bowel damage.

Dieticians also warn against some popular Jordanian misconceptions associated with weight loss.

Aline Nashef, a dietician with eight-years working experience, spoke of an increasing number of Jordanians wanting to lose weight and look fit, especially over the last three years.

Fitness centres, which have mushroomed across Jordan, are reporting brisk business.

"People from all social backgrounds come to my clinic, even bedouin women from the most remote areas in southern Jordan," Nashef said.

However, she criticised people

who diet for a while and stop and then repeat the process.

"This state of chaotic dieting disturbs the body's fat-burning process and the body's metabolism," Nashef said.

"Instead, proper dieting should become a way of life, not merely a transient period targeting a special occasion."

Maram Haddadin, who holds a postgraduate degree in nutrition, noted that people in general seek to lose weight overnight, no matter how great the harm to their bodies.

She said people should not lose more than two kilograms of weight a week and stressed that a diet that works for one person may not be suitable for another since bodies react differently to calorie intakes. Therefore, she said, diets should not be copied.

"People have different bone structures and they differ in the amount of calories they need," she said. "You just cannot follow or prescribe the same food portion to all."

Albright arrives in London for Kosovo talks

LONDON (AFP) — U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright arrived here Saturday for discussions on Kosovo as criticism of her and U.S. efforts to forge a peace in the troubled Yugoslav province mounted.

Albright, who changed her return flight from a three-nation Asian tour to include the London stop, was to meet former U.S. senator Bob Dole whom she dispatched this week to the Balkans to lobby the ethnic Kosovar Albanians to accept the peace proposal.

Albright is also to meet with top NATO General Wesley Clark, chief U.S. Kosovo negotiator Christopher Hill and hold private talks with British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook at his country home.

Friday, Dole met leaders in the Kosovar Albanian community, including some from the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) in Macedonia after he was denied a visa to enter Kosovo by Serb authorities in Belgrade.

"They will be discussing the results of Dole's trip to the region," State Department spokesman James Rubin said, blasting Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for the visa refusal.

"President Milosevic has lost another chance to demonstrate that he is a serious member of the international community," Rubin said, adding though that Dole had succeeded in holding meetings in Skopje and that Albright had spoken to him by phone during them.

It was not immediately clear whether the ethnic Albanians had signed the peace agreement that was put on the table as the only option for both them and the Serbs last month in Rambouillet, France.

Although Rubin said he believed Dole had made "significant progress" in Skopje, reporters travelling with Albright were told "not to expect too much."

At Rambouillet, the Kosovar Albanians agreed in principle to the peace plan, which provides them with a high degree of autonomy but not the independence they want, but asked for two weeks to discuss it with their people.

The two weeks expires Tuesday and both the Albanians and the Serbs, who are still opposed to the core of the plan — a NATO peacekeeping force — are to return to the negotiating table on March 15.

Should the agreement fail, the side deemed responsible for it is to be punished, with the Kosovar Albanians facing the threat of a loss of international support and the Serbs facing NATO air strikes.

The Serbs, who are now massing troops on the Kosovo border for unknown reasons, would also face NATO retaliation if they resume crackdowns on ethnic Albanian population.

As the drama around Dole's visa and visit played out, Albright has come under increasingly hostile criticism in the U.S. and international press for her handling of the peace talks.

In an apparent bid to halt some of the criticism, a senior State Department official admitted that Albright and Washington had misjudged the Kosovar Albanians' interest in signing on the agreement's bottom line in Rambouillet.

"I think that's true," the official said, noting that the Albanian leadership had told Albright they would sign. "I'm not going to argue with that. They didn't sign. We misjudged that."

The criticism has clearly cut deep with officials especially angered by an influential Washington columnist who opined that Albright had so destroyed U.S. credibility that minor players in the Kosovo crisis were now hanging up the phone on her.

The senior official said the "hang up" allegation was totally false and had been based on a misunderstanding of a magazine report about the conclusion of a phone call Albright had with Adem Demaci, the KLA's former political representative.

But perhaps the most damaging to the department and Albright was a front-page report in Friday's editions of the Paris-based International Herald Tribune which quoted an unnamed American ambassador in Europe attacking the secretary for her performance at Rambouillet.

"Her energy was impressive, but her performance injected new uncertainties into the situation and sowed doubts about the seriousness of U.S. diplomacy," the ambassador said.

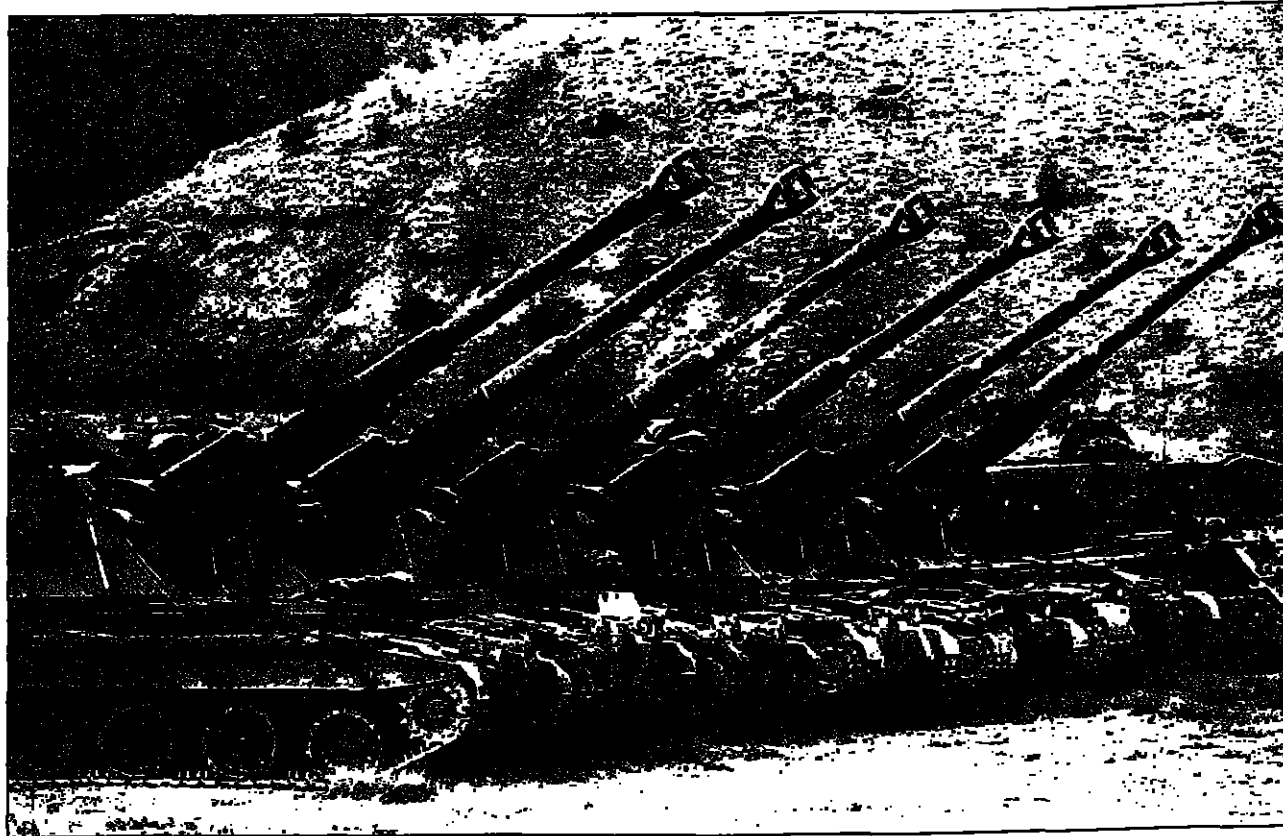
The damning article quoted others as criticising Albright for a variety of reasons ranging from complaints that she had been too tough to complaints that she had been in Rambouillet at all.

"When you're the United States, people are either mad at you for trying to fix a problem or they're mad at you for not trying to fix a problem," a senior administration official said in defence of Albright.

The official put most of the criticism down to "Euro complaining" and maintained that without U.S. leadership "right now we would have nothing going on on the peace front in Kosovo. Nothing."

The official admitted that thus far the Kosovo peace process had not been a total success and that Albright had been "frustrated" by her inability to complete the deal at Rambouillet.

But he stressed that neither was the process a total failure. This is an "unfortunate series of potshots and we have been trying to do what (we) consider to be a very important and right thing."



Self-propelled guns of Britain's 88 Battery, 4 Regiment, Royal Artillery, are positioned during training. These armoured vehicles are part of the British contingent to the NATO-led operation that has deployed into the Balkans, with a forward mounting base in former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Reuters photo)

NATO steps up preparations for Kosovo peacekeeping

BRUSSELS, Belgium (AP) — NATO pushed ahead Saturday with preparations for an eventual peacekeeping operation in Kosovo by sending units to set up a command and control centre in neighbouring Macedonia.

Units from NATO's allied command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps started deploying to the Macedonian capital of Skopje to coordinate operations of allied troops, said a statement from NATO's military headquarters.

Some 6,000 NATO troops were in Macedonia ready to form the advance guard of a Kosovo peacekeeping force that is eventually expected to total 26,000.

Plans for the force to cross into Kosovo are stalled by Serbia's refusal to sign up to a peace deal that allows foreign troops to enter its southern province.

NATO says the peacekeepers will only go into Kosovo if Serbia gives the green light and signs a peace deal with ethnic Albanian rebels.

Peace talks are due to resume March 15.

The new headquarters in Skopje will be under the operational command of U.S. Adm. James O. Ellis Jr., commander-in-chief allied forces southern Europe.

Ellis also exercises control of the NATO forces on standby in Macedonia to extract unarmed international monitors from Kosovo if they come under threat, the statement said.

A detachment from the new headquarters will assist

NATO forces being shipped into the region through the Greek port of Salonica.

NATO officials said Friday the alliance had invited senior Yugoslav military officers for a briefing this weekend aimed at easing their concerns about the role of the proposed NATO-led force in Kosovo. However officers at the alliance's military headquarters outside the southern Belgian city of Mons declined Saturday to say if the talks would take place.

Decision to share strategic city plunges Bosnia into political crisis

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — A confrontation between angry Bosnian Serbs and U.S. peacekeeping soldiers ended with a Serb radical shot dead, NATO said Saturday.

The attack by Serbs in northern Bosnia occurred Friday night amid tension over a pair of unpopular international rulings on Bosnia — transferring the strategic city of Brcko from exclusive Bosnian Serb control, and firing the hard-line Bosnian Serb leader.

President Nikola Poplasen refused to step down, and the Western-backed prime minister announced he would resign to protest the decision to place Brcko under multi-ethnic control.

Carlos Westendorp, the senior international official for Bosnia, Saturday predicted "turbulence" in Bosnia for the next several days.

U.S. peacekeepers, on the alert to the potential for violence following the decisions, were confronted near their Eagle Base in Tuzla in Bosnian Serb-controlled territory, according

to a NATO account. Four armed assailants entered a restaurant in Ugljevik where the troops were coordinating humanitarian support and began striking their table with clubs and breaking glass bottles in a threatening manner.

The soldiers made their way out of the restaurant as they were punched and shoved, and were chased toward their vehicles by 15 to 20 people outside. One soldier drew his weapon after being struck in the back with a club. The soldier then fatally shot his attacker when he failed to break off his attack, the statement said.

The victim was later identified as Krsto Micic, the vice president of the hard-line Bosnian Serb Radical Party in the town of Ugljevik.

His party issued a statement in Belgrade saying "Bloodthirsty American criminals and terrorists" shot Micic "in cold blood." It said "American bandits ... will pay dearly for murdering Micic."

Some 6,000 U.S. troops are serving in Bosnia as a part of the 32,000-strong

multinational contingent, trying to implement the peace process in the post-war country.

"We are going to have turbulence in the coming days but I hope that with our constant pressure and dialogue we could come to an improvement of the peace implementation process," Westendorp told CNN in an interview broadcast Saturday.

He called it "just a simple coincidence" that both rulings — which inflamed Serb nationalists — came on the same day Friday.

Friday, Westendorp said Brcko would no longer remain under Bosnian Serb control. Instead, all three ethnic groups — Serbs, Croats and Muslims — will administer Brcko, a city of about 90,000 that the Serbs had run under international supervision.

The decision resolves the last major territorial issue left from the Bosnian war. Negotiators at Dayton decided to defer a ruling because of strong claims made on the city by the three ethnic groups.

International leaders ranging from Croatian

President Franjo Tudjman to U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana welcomed the decision by U.S. chief arbitrator Roberts Owen.

Before the decision was announced, Westendorp fired Poplasen, saying he ignored "the will of the people ... and consistently acted to trigger instability."

Poplasen had insisted that Serbs retain control of Brcko. He called the order to step down "undemocratic and contrary" to the Dayton peace agreement and said, "I cannot accept it."

He called for a referendum to decide whether he should remain in office. Under the Bosnian Serb constitution, Vice President Mirko Sarovic would succeed Poplasen. But Sarovic refused.

The sacking of Poplasen followed his efforts to remove the pro-Western prime minister, Milorad Dodik. Dodik announced later Friday that he was resigning because of the Brcko decision — a move international officials urged him to reconsider.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Ukraine accused of muzzling media ahead of election

KIEV (AFP) — Journalists have been assaulted and media have come under intense political pressure in the Ukraine recently as part of a campaign to muzzle opposition ahead of a presidential election, an international press rights group said Saturday. Reporters sans Frontiers (reporters without borders) made the accusations in a statement which appealed to Ukrainian authorities to put an end to the "harassment" and ensure journalists' safety in the run-up to the October poll. Since the beginning of the year, four journalists have been assaulted and another detained, two opposition newspapers have been closed down and two independent TV stations have been pressured, the organisation said. It called on European institutions to persuade Kiev to allow the Ukrainian media to cover the elections objectively. Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) observers in 1998 said that general elections that year had been marred by violence and an abuse of power and that the media had favoured certain parties.

Four generations of a family killed in London house fire

LONDON (AP) — A devastating fire tore through a home in northeast London Saturday killing seven people, including three young children. Scotland Yard said officers were treating the blaze at the Bellamy Road home in Chingford as suspicious, and had launched a murder investigation. The fire started at 0100 GMT and completely destroyed the property. The victims, who have not yet been named, included a father, his 4-year-old twin daughters and his 2-year-old son, police said. The children's grandmother and great-grandmother also perished, as did another woman, police said. One man escaped by climbing from a window. He was treated at a London hospital for burns to his hands and released. "We are treating this as a murder," said detective Supt. James More Sutherland of the Metropolitan Police. "This is a horrific attack on innocents. This is the worst I have seen in 31 years in this job." Sutherland refused to discuss a possible motive or media reports that a can of gasoline was found at the scene. "We are at the beginning of the investigation," he said. "We are in for a long haul."

Singapore arrests hackers who revealed others' passwords

SINGAPORE (AP) — Two computer hackers were arraigned Saturday on charges of sending a programme to unwitting Internet users to record their key strokes and snag their log-in names and passwords, then posting them on a Web site. Art student David Kok Tuck, 22, and his unemployed friend Pang Soon Chen, 19, were arrested Friday and identified by government-controlled news media after their court appearance. They are charged with using a programme called Trojan horse to obtain the names and passwords for 17 users of the Singnet Internet service provider and posting them on a Web site called Sicknet in the United States. After subscribers alerted Singnet to the existence of the site, the company reported the matter to local police Wednesday. The police computer crime branch tracked down the suspects within 36 hours. They face sentences of up to five years in prison and 15,000 Singapore dollars (\$8,823) for gaining unauthorised access to computer material and unauthorised disclosure of access codes.

Man takes wife and children hostage in Belgium

GENT, Belgium (AFP) — A man, apparently drunk and armed, was holding his wife and two children, a four-year-old and an eight-month-old, hostage Saturday at Knesselaere, near the northern Belgian town of Gent, police said. The district was cordoned off and ambulances and police were at the scene as well as members of a special tactical unit. Officials were trying to persuade the hostage-taker to give himself up. It was not known why the man was holding his family hostage.

South African pupil shoots teacher dead

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — An 18-year-old school pupil shot and killed a teacher in front of a classroom full of students. South African newspapers reported Saturday. The teenager shot teacher Andreas Werth, 39, in the head Friday, apparently in revenge for being expelled from the Townview high school in Krugersdorp, west of Johannesburg. Werth died later in hospital. Students told the Star newspaper that the killer pupil had been expelled two weeks ago and threatened to murder the teacher in revenge. But police spokesman Patrys Greyling told The Citizen: "Nobody has any idea why Werth was shot. There had been no argument or any kind of animosity between him and his attacker." Police had not been able to trace the pupil by mid-Saturday.

One dead, seven injured in Pristina shooting

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — One person was killed and seven injured when a café in Kosovo's capital was sprayed with gunfire. Serb sources said Saturday. The Serb-run media centre in Pristina said all victims in the Friday night attack were ethnic Albanians. International observers from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) gave a different toll, saying they found one dead and five wounded at the scene. Three of the injured were in serious condition. OSCE spokesperson Beatrice Lacoste said. Both Serb and OSCE sources said unknown gunmen opened fire on the café from a vehicle, then raced away. The café was in the Albanian-populated district of Vranjevac. Police and the OSCE were investigating. Lacoste said. Late Friday six Serbs were injured when a hand grenade was hurled into a Serb-owned restaurant in the city of Pec, in western Kosovo, the media centre said. Rebels fighting Serb rule over Kosovo's ethnic Albanian majority were suspected in the attack, it said. Last attack on a café in Pec. On Friday, 11 Serbian policemen were wounded, five seriously, in an ambush near the central Kosovo village of Magura blamed on the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).

Rome falling behind in Millennium preparations

ROME (AP) — The celebration lasts all year, 30 million guests are coming, and the Pope is pressing to make sure all is ready.

Talk about pressure. It is still winter, but Rome is feeling the heat these days as concern mounts over whether the ancient capital will be ready by year's end, when tourists and pilgrims start pouring in for Millennium festivities and the holy year declared by Pope John Paul II.

From the start, deadlines were tight for hundreds of projects, ranging from widening highways to modernising rail stations, aimed at keeping the masses moving through gridlocked Rome.

Now inspectors are warning that many key

projects, including a six-story garage dug out of an ancient hill to park invading railroad cars, risk not being completed before Christmas Eve, when the Pope will give a symbolic knock with a hammer on a sealed door at the back of St. Peter's Basilica and officially open the holy year.

"At this point, we need a miracle," wrote the newsweekly Panorama. Stuck in cars and buses detouring around dug-up roads, many Romans had already glumly concluded the construction won't be finished in time.

Compounding the anxiety over not meeting deadlines was the recent, dramatically higher estimate, by the Vatican and Rome, of

the number of expected visitors — up from 20 million to nearly 30 million.

"We're on a razor's edge," said Rome's holy year commissioner, Paolo Gentiloni.

The Pope didn't mince his words, either. He told Rome's mayor he hoped all the projects would be wrapped up in time for Millennium celebrations — an "unparalleled appointment" for humanity, he called it.

Only a couple of days earlier, Public Works Minister Enrico Micheli had toured work sites and tried to pooh-pooh worriers, including a top aide who publicly questioned whether Rome could make up for lost time.

With construction

crews now authorised to work night shifts — a stunning new work rhythm for the city which everybody knows wasn't built in a day — some lost time can be made up, but not all, inspectors said.

Most of the projects were designed to prevent lumbering tour buses from further clogging Rome as the faithful move from church to church. The city and the Vatican are already arguing over the number of buses jamming the streets for the Pope's weekly public audiences.

Even modest plans, like one to install 44 video cameras near basilicas to help traffic cops keep tabs on pilgrims' progress, are running months behind

schedule.

Much of the lateness was blamed on bureaucracy in a country largely tangled in red tape.

In the case of the underground garage, work had to be interrupted until a subcontractor furnished proof he had no ties to organised crime, a requirement for public contracts.

The dismal report card is all the more striking considering that many of the more ambitious — and, critics say, more useful — projects were scratched from the original wish-list as unfeasible within the deadlines.

"Traffic will be the same as before, and worse than before," lamented Antonio Tamburino, an engineer and environmentalist

who advises the government.

Among projects cancelled before they got started was a cross-town subway line to give Rome more than just the rudiments of underground transport and Romans a real alternative to packed buses, snail-paced cars and motorbikes.

Another project pitched in the wastebasket was meant to unclog the bottlenecked Tiberside roadway just as it passes near the Vatican.

"For the pilgrims there will be indulgences, holiness, paradise. For the Romans, nothing remains," said Giovanni Negri, whose Citizens' Group also keeps tabs on the holy year works.

World
Bodies of
victims
blown out
from
Uganda

Bodies of victims flown out from Uganda

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — In a subdued culmination to a tragic week, the bodies of eight foreign tourists killed by Hutu rebels in a Ugandan national park were flown out of the country and began their journey home.

The coffins bearing the remains of the tourists, including two Americans, arrived early Saturday at London's Gatwick airport.

Before being put on the plane at Entebbe airport in the Ugandan capital of Kampala, a private flag-folding ceremony was held for the two Americans, Rob Haubner, 48, and Susan Miller, 42.

Haubner and Miller were Oregon-based executives at the Computer Chip giant Intel. Like the other victims, they were visiting southwestern Uganda's Bwindi National Park to see its rare mountain gorillas.

The eight tourists were hacked and bludgeoned to death by Hutu Rwandan rebels who attacked three campsites Monday. Four rangers were also killed, and six other tourists managed to escape.

The flags were given to the slain Americans' friends, Susan Studd and Bob McLaurin, also Intel employees, who survived the rebel attack and who accompanied the bodies on the flight to Britain, said U.S. embassy public affairs officer Virgil Bodeen.

Bodeen said they would take the flags to the victims' families. The other victims included four Britons and two New Zealanders.

The Ugandan government, meanwhile, said it would make every effort to ensure the safety of future tourists.

The Ugandan army has intensified a joint manhunt with Rwandan forces to capture or kill the Hutu rebels behind the attacks.

Hundreds of troops are combing the dense jungles along the Uganda-Congo border looking for the rebels. Fifteen rebels, some wearing clothes stolen from the tourists, were killed by the troops Wednesday, Ugandan officials reported.

"I can assure you we are doing everything possible so that this point of tourism is safe for everyone," said Ugandan Foreign Minister Eriya Kategaya. Still, the rebels — Rwandans who are based in eastern Congo — may be difficult to stop because of Congo's uncooperative government, Kategaya said.

Kategaya met with the U.S. and British ambassadors Friday to express his country's condolences.

Meanwhile, an FBI team and detectives from Scotland Yard are working with Kenyan investigators. Kategaya said he hoped the investigation might shed light on how the rebels had obtained such precise information about the campsites.

"Maybe there are some collaborators within our population, because the attacks seemed to have been very precise and clear with prior information on the positions of the people and even the look of the place," Kategaya said.

He said he was unaware of the detention of a suspect, which had been reported in a government-owned newspaper Thursday.

The Rwandan rebels were among Hutu fighters who fled Rwanda in 1994 after killing more than 500,000 minority Tutsis and politically moderate Hutus in a government-orchestrated genocide.

Since then, they have been operating from bases in Congo, launching cross-border attacks in Rwanda and more recently inside Congo and in Uganda.

Nancy Powell, the U.S. ambassador to Uganda, said a note that the rebels gave to an American survivor of the attack criticised the U.S. and British governments for supporting Rwanda.

She said it was signed with the acronym ALIR, or the Rwanda Liberation Army, which put a bounty on the heads of Americans in Rwanda in 1996. The group has claimed responsibility for several rebel attacks in northwestern Rwanda in 1994 and 1997.



Fire and rescue workers check through the wreckage of the Air France Boeing 747 freighter after it had crash and burst into flames at Madras, India. The freighter with faulty landing gear ploughed into the runway at Madras Saturday and soon burst into flames, senior aviation officials said. According to airport authority all five crew members were safe, although one was in hospital with broken bones (Reuters photo)

Air France cargo plane burns on India landing

MADRAS (R) — An Air France Boeing 747 freighter said to have faulty landing gear ploughed into a runway at Madras Saturday and soon burst into flames.

An air France official said all five personnel on board the 747-300 freighter were safe, but an airport official said the plane had been gutted.

"Three crew members, a ground engineer and a cargo officer are safe. One has broken bones and is in hospital." The accident occurred shortly after midnight (1830 GMT Friday) and the airport's main runway was closed until midday Saturday, an airports authority of India official said.

The aircraft, purchased by Air France in 1978, had had some problems with its nose wheel about 2,130 metres after touchdown, said the airport official.

"Probably the nose wheel did not extend. The aircraft threw

up smoke and then caught fire," H.S. Khola, director-general of civil aviation, told Reuters. "Fire vehicles were then rushed to the aircraft, but they failed to extinguish the flames."

The airports authority official said the plane had burst into flames at the wings about 20 minutes after touchdown as firefighters were attending to smoke coming from the fuselage.

"The fire spread to the engines, which burst into flames, and the entire plane is now totally gutted," the official said.

Khola said he had ordered an inquiry that would involve the directorate-general of civil aviation and Air France.

Madras airport director Sudhir Kumar said 22 flights, both international and domestic, had been affected as of midday by the runway shutdown.

A Lufthansa passenger flight

from Frankfurt was diverted to Bombay and a Swissair freighter from Singapore was diverted to Bangalore.

The first 2,130 metres of the runway was reopened at 12.34 p.m. (0704 GMT), allowing Boeing 737s and Airbus A-320s to land, the airports official authority said.

Airport officials hoped the full runway would be open late in the evening, he added.

Kumar said the Air France freighter had been carrying 66 tonnes of cargo. He said he did not have details, but the plane appeared to be carrying some garments.

An airport security official, who asked not to be identified, said the plane was carrying medicines and machine parts, and that the medicines had been destroyed.

Air France spokesman Vinay Mohindra said a special technical team would be sent from Paris later Saturday to assist

Indian authorities and assess the cause of the fire.

The flight originated in Paris and arrived in India via Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. It flew to Madras from the nearby Indian city of Bangalore and was bound for Karachi, Pakistan.

The accident was Air France's fourth in the past year.

All 43 passengers and 10 crew on board a Boeing 727-200 belonging to Ecuador's military-run Tame Airline and leased by Air France died on April 20, 1998, when the plane crashed into a mountain near Bogota soon after take-off.

On Dec. 30, an Air France 737-300 with 59 passengers landed safely at Lyon after losing a wheel soon after take-off.

On Feb. 13, an Air France Airbus A-320 landing at the southern French city of Montpellier collided with a glider, tearing off its right wing, but both craft touched down safely.

Gusmao holds first known talks with pro-Indonesian Timorese leaders

JAKARTA (AFP) — Xanana Gusmao, the jailed leader of East Timor's independence movement, held talks here Saturday with three opposing pro-Indonesian East Timorese militia chiefs, officials said.

The unannounced meeting in a second-floor office of the justice ministry in central Jakarta, came a day after both Gusmao and the militia leaders met with U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

But Clemento dos Reyes Amaral, secretary general of Indonesia's National Commission on Human Rights, told reporters the talks were not a result of Albright's visit but had been planned "several days ago."

Gusmao's meeting with the three hardline pro-integrationists — Domingo

Polcarpo, Domingo Soares and Matheus Maia — were the first known between leaders of the two bitterly opposed sides in East Timor since Jakarta suggested it could give the territory independence.

The talks started at 2:30 in the afternoon and were continuing two hours later, an AFP reporter at the ministry said.

Since Jakarta announced in January that East Timorese could choose either broad autonomy or independence after 23 years of virtual military occupation, tensions between pro-integrationists and pro-independence factions have escalated.

Several people have died in clashes in East Timor and hundreds of Indonesian settlers and traders have been reported leaving the

territory by ship in anticipation that the choice will be for independence.

Albright said Gusmao, who is serving a 20-year sentence here for armed rebellion, had told her he hoped to bring the warring factions together through dialogue and avert an escalation of the violence.

He has also called for an international "presence" in East Timor during the transition to either independence or autonomy to ensure a smooth transition.

Indonesia invaded the former Portuguese colony of East Timor in 1975 and annexed it a year later in a move never recognised by the United Nations.

Talks under U.N. auspices between Lisbon and Jakarta are scheduled to resume next week to finalise the autonomy proposal.

Japanese minister to quit in Schwarzenegger scandal

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's justice minister is to resign early next week over an immigration blunder involving his hero, U.S. movie star Arnold Schwarzenegger, news reports said Saturday.

The 64-year-old minister, Shozaburo Nakamura, has decided to step down following allegations that he used his position to keep a document written by the U.S. star explaining his arrival here without a passport, newspapers said.

Nakamura is under fire as parliament has been suspended since opposition parties launched a boycott calling for his resignation.

He is to meet Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi early next week and inform the premier of his intention of resigning, the Yomiuri Shimbun said.

Obuchi is expected to accept it, the mass-circulation daily said.

"The justice minister has a lot of trouble," a senior official of the ruling Liberal

Democratic Party (LDP) was quoted by the Yomiuri as saying.

"He is going to resign, which is the best choice," the unnamed official said.

Another senior LDP official told the Sankei Shimbun: "He cannot help but resign to calm down the confusion."

The two largest opposition parties, the Democratic Party and the Komei Party, agreed late Friday to jointly demand his resignation.

Nakamura told reporters late Friday: "I want to think after seeing situations Monday."

Schwarzenegger flew into Osaka in a private plane last October to attend a groundbreaking ceremony for a theme park. He reportedly explained his passport had been stolen when he could not produce a travel document.

The American actor was allowed to enter Japan with special permission after he wrote the report.

But it took nearly half a

year for the document to reach the justice ministry's department in charge of immigration, giving rise to suspicions that Nakamura — a confessed Schwarzenegger fan — had kept it as a keepsake.

The justice minister told parliament he had approved Schwarzenegger's entry after seeing a faxed copy of the report and the original report reached his office much later.

"I told my secretary to return it but it had apparently been left in the minister's office," said Nakamura, who became justice minister when Keizo Obuchi was elected prime minister last July.

"I and all in the family are Schwarzenegger fans," he said.

In January, Nakamura caused a storm when he suggested in a New Year's speech to justice ministry officials that Japan should revise its anti-war constitution to have a full-fledged military.

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Strong government needed to coordinate policy

Sunday's Economic Pulse



Dr. Fahed Fanek

JORDAN HAS just entered a new era. As far as Jordan is concerned, the 21st century has begun two years earlier than a traditional calendar would indicate. It is not that the world around us has changed, the change took place inside Jordan, through a transfer of power from one generation to another.

Since the stage, we have just entered, is new for domestic considerations, it is only normal for the imperatives to stem mainly from issues inherited from the previous era. They will come by way of adjustment, correction, and meeting challenges and problems as a pretext for a fresh start.

Some analysts believe that political aspects should take priority. They cite the near stagnation of democracy, and the near failure of the peace process. Others believe that economic aspects are more urgent and deserve higher priority.

They point out the meagre economic growth rate, the spread of poverty, the high unemployment rate, and the heavy debt burden.

These two sets of priorities are by no means contradictory or mutually exclusive. True, the new regime may choose to start with the political issues or with the economic issues, but the two sets of issues go hand in hand. The diagnosis, planning, decision-making and implementation are not missions left for an individual to tackle full time. They are the responsibility of different institutions. Those in charge of the democratic process, and the relations with Israel may have nothing to do with the current economic issues of the country, they hardly have an economic role to play. Those institutions, on the other hand, who should worry about the restoration of economic growth, good management of external

debts, poverty and alleviating unemployment are not responsible for the political performance of the country and may have no political role to play.

There is a sort of division of labour. The expression "Economic Ministerial Team" is now a household label. Perhaps we shall soon have what is to be called "Political Ministerial Team" and even an "Administration Ministerial Team" to deal with redundant staff, policies and regulations, promote transparency, and to wage war against corruption in both the public and private sectors.

Overall responsibility to indicate the general direction, set the tone and coordinate all efforts, remains on the shoulders of a strong central government, with a clear vision for the future, and full knowledge of exactly what should

administrative priorities for the new era. However, there are lots of ideas regarding the specifics and perhaps the personalities who should be entrusted with the multiple mission.

The identification of objectives and ways and means to achieve them are admittedly of the utmost importance, but no one can underestimate the importance of the qualified individuals which should be charged with the heavy duty. This is evident by the Royal letters of designation addressed to new prime ministers, during the past decade, which used to list objectives and policies. Unfortunately, most of the governments could not rise to the level of the challenge and eventually failed to reach the specific goals they undertook to reach.

Identification of priorities and objectives is necessary but not sufficient.

be done. A government that possesses the will needed to move effectively, and enjoys full support from the King, the Parliament, and public opinion. In our case, it seems that little differences, if any, exist regarding the political, economic and

Rawabdeh's tough task

THERE IS near consensus that the top priority for the government of Abdul Raouf Rawabdeh is to reform economy, which suffers stagnation, and to alleviate poverty and unemployment. Most governments in recent years have had similar mandates but failed to attain much in terms of reversing the tide of poverty and rising unemployment. The reasons for their failures are plentiful and range from external factors such as the deepening recession in the world economy, low oil prices and regional political instability. Would the new prime minister then succeed where all previous efforts failed? Does Rawabdeh have a magic wand to stimulate the slackening economy, reduce poverty and create employment?

Our economy is to a great extent part of the global and regional ones. As long as these two pass through a recessionary period, we should not expect the able Rawabdeh to work miracles.

The Arab Gulf countries on which many pin hope for more investment in Jordan and improved trade face severe strains due to the dramatic drop in the price of oil. Some of the richest Gulf states have trouble balancing their own budgets. Foreign investment is still trickling into the country, but at a rate that is much below what is urgently needed.

As long as the peace process is stalled, the climate for investment will continue to suffer as well. Prospects for better trade with the Palestinians depend on the goodwill of the Israeli government. If the peace process on the Palestinian-Israeli track were to receive a boost, that would create confidence and a better climate for trade and investment.

On the other hand, much of our exports still need the opening of Iraqi market. Our industry needs to grow faster, but with markets closed, there is very little industrialists can do.

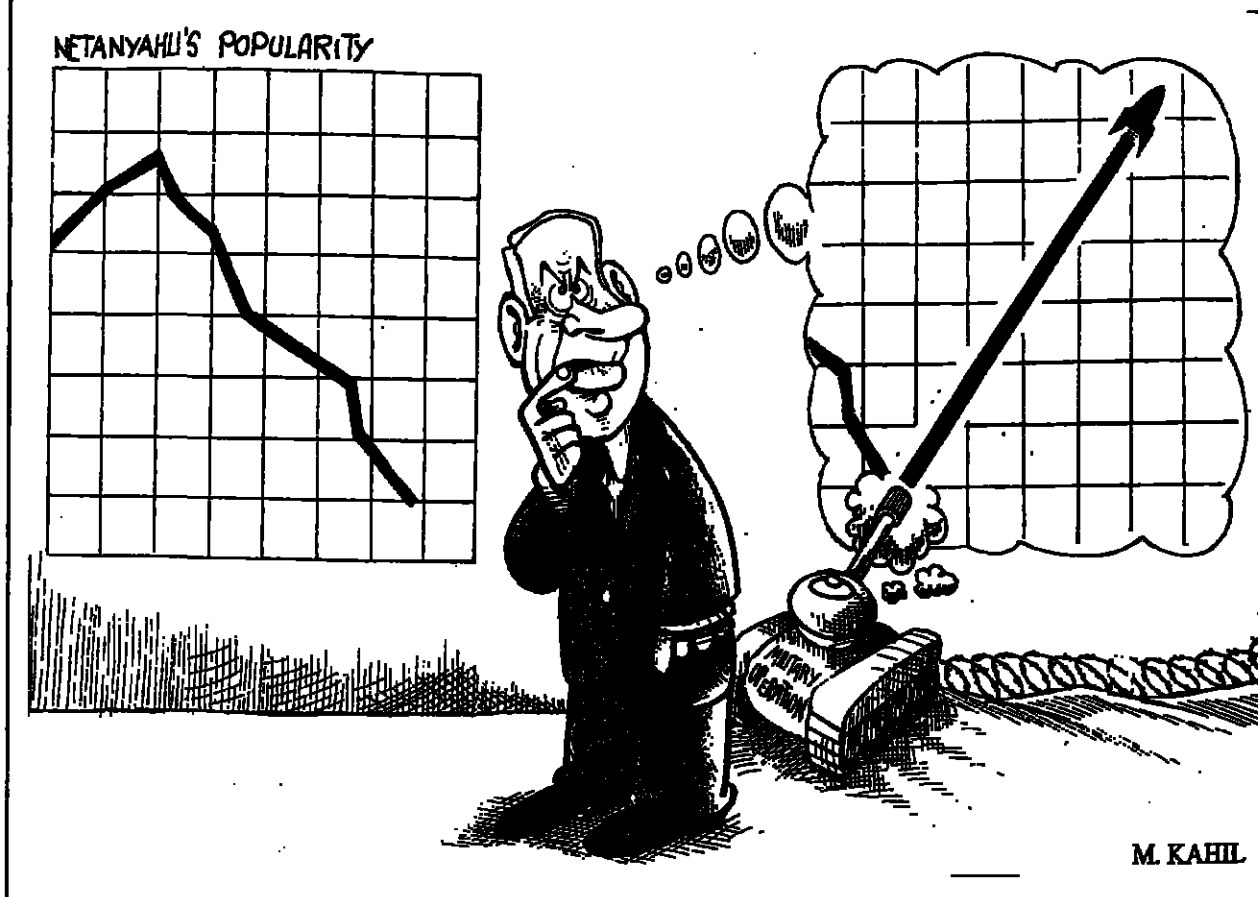
The lack of appropriate legislation is a factor hindering investment. There is, of course, always room for further perfecting and refining the existing laws, yet that in its own is not enough. We also need to create new markets and to diversify, especially by taking up the fastest growing industry, infotainment.

This requires releasing the Jordanian educational and creative potential through more liberal legislation, like a new press law that allows Jordanians to enter with full force the market of information and entertainment. There is a huge market in the Arab World, that knows no boundaries, for information and media entertainment. And there is an army of computer wizkids in the country and equally of artists, graphic designers, educationalists and the likes of whom could turn Jordan into a centre of infotainment.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Taher Adwan said that in recent years, Jordan has reached an advanced stage of political "maturity," and its national issues are no longer only debatable between society's different powers or the government, thanks to the Hashemite leadership. In addition to this internal maturity, the Kingdom has witnessed openness from several Arab and foreign parties, who have offered their political and economic assistance — a factor that will create a positive atmosphere in which to achieve economic success to help the country eliminate unemployment and other problems, added Adwan. Such positive signs both internal and external should be exploited to achieve the best for the country, and it is not an exaggeration to say that the situation is currently dependent on proper governmental policies and taking the "correct" decisions, said the writer, who added that the only thing that worries Jordanians at this stage is the economic situation.

Al Dostour's Mazen Saket said Jordan's recent efforts to achieve indepth political relations and solidarity with Arabs and to overcome earlier obstacles, have put an end to speculations about continuity, and the actual results of such Arab ties. Positive developments have taken place in recent weeks with Syria and Kuwait, after political and diplomatic relations with these states had been "cold," said Saket, who added that important practical steps have been taken with respect to financial assistance. Jordanians praised and appreciated such support because it reveals political and economic directives that can help the Kingdom overcome its obstacles and challenges, said the writer. Jordan's location, economic capabilities and political challenges force it to seek strong relations with all "brothers" as it is the only way to meet these requirements, according to Saket. Therefore, the Kingdom is required to deal with different points of view, which are sometimes contradictory at the national and international levels, he added. The writer said he believes that in order to maintain such this important approach, Jordan has to find a "tough and complicated" formula to deal with a "divided" Arab situation, which yields to international plans and interests.



Race relations: No simple pattern, no golden rule

By Gwynne Dyer

BACK IN 1979 director Walter Hill, recalling the success of 'West Side Story' (which transposed Shakespeare's 'Romeo and Juliet' to 1950s New York City street gangs), made a clever film called 'The Warriors'. The classical text he looted was much older, however: Xenophon's 'Anabasis', the story of 10,000 Greek mercenaries who were left stranded and surrounded by enemies 1,500 km from the sea after the prince they had backed for the Persian throne was killed in 401 BC.

As 'Anabasis' told how the desperate Greeks fought their way through hostile tribes back down to the safety of the Black Sea, so 'The Warriors' tells the story of a street gang from Coney Island fighting their way back home across New York City, with every other gang trying to kill them, after a meeting up in the Bronx goes terribly wrong.

It was a stylish film with a great soundtrack. But as an American friend pointed out to me, it contained one completely implausible element: the Warriors included whites, blacks, a Latino and even a native American Indian.

Street gangs in America always consist of only one race or ethnic group.

'West Side Story' got it right: 'The Warriors' got it wrong. Which is a depressing thought after a week that has seen a murder trial in Texas where the victim was chosen at random because he was black, and the release of a report on the racial killing of a black youth in London that bluntly describes the Metropolitan Police as 'institutionally racist'.

So you have to ask: are 'Western' societies as a whole intrinsically racist? Is the best anyone can hope for a 'separate but equal' society with little real crossing of the racial lines, or can white-majority societies ever evolve into colour-blind multicultural cultures? The answer depends not on how well-meaning elites think, but on the attitudes down in the broad bottom of the society — so street gangs are relevant.

To the best of my knowledge all the street gangs of America are still colour-coded, but consider England for a moment. Somers Town, quite near to where I live, is one of the most deprived districts of London: poverty, unemployment, high crime rate, practically everybody living in public housing — and, of course, gangs.

A friend of mine who serves part-time as a magistrate tells me that a lot of the cases he hears from Somers Town involve racial violence. But here's the thing. It is not whites versus blacks. It is white and black kids in the same gangs, beating up Asian kids.

It makes sense, in an ugly way: most black British have West Indian origins,

'You have to ask: are 'Western' societies as a whole intrinsically racist? The answer depends... on the attitudes down in the broad bottom of the society — so street gangs are relevant'

which means that they have the same English-speaking, Christian roots as most white British. Most Asians in Britain, by contrast, come from Hindu, Muslim, or Sikh families, and if recently arrived may not speak good English.

Cultural differences set the Asians apart from their neighbours, and in some cases make them scapegoats for the anger of bored black and white kids who feel that they have no future. This is not a happy situation, but it is a different situation from the United States.

Cultural clashes are sometimes disastrous, but they do not have the lunatic simplicity and immutability of race prejudice. In the longer term, moreover, the spectacular cultural differences that now proliferate in Britain and other developed countries with a high immigration rate will fade, as a younger generation grows to maturity and assimilation works its usual miracle (or tragedy, depending on your point of view).

The situation in France, which is usually portrayed as a hotbed of racial hatred (the anti-immigrant National Front wins up to 15 per cent of the vote in national elections), is even more instructive. The 'banlieus' surrounding big French cities include huge tracts of high-rise public housing where the government has dumped both the white underclass and most of the country's large immigrant population, and they are indeed overrun by gangs.

To listen to rightwing French politicians ranting on the television, you would think that the gangs were an Islamic revolution in the making, but nothing could be further from the truth. Their members are tough and sometimes alarmingly well-armed kids who fight rival gangs and swarm the malls in neighbouring banlieus

on weekends, stealing everything they can carry away — but they are NOT defined by race or culture.

A typical gang will contain white French kids, Muslim kids of Algerian and Moroccan origin, black Africans of both Christian and Muslim descent, and maybe some Turks and Yugoslavs. They are the kids who grew up in this particular cluster of tower-blocks — this 'cité' — and all the other 'cités' are enemy turf. Again, it's not a pretty situation, but it is not a racially charged situation at all. The Warriors could exist in France.

What all this is telling us is that the historic pattern of race relations in the United States is not the inevitable template for all other multicultural societies. Other countries, with different histories and cultures, can end up in quite different patterns.

It may also be telling us that the cup is half-full, not half-empty, even in the U.S. The Texas jury did convict the murderer of James Bird, after all, and sentenced him to death. Stephen Lawrence's racist murderers in London will never be convicted because the police bungled the investigation so badly, but at last an official inquiry has opened up the whole issue of a racist culture in the police force.

And then there is the submerged ninetenths of the iceberg: the soaring proportion of men and women from all racial groups who 'marry out' in every Western country.

About 10 per cent of African-American males are married to white women, up from 2 per cent in their parents' time. Thirty per cent of young British men and women of West Indian origin have a white partner. Some 60 per cent of Asian-Americans in their 20s are marrying somebody of another race. Give it one more generation, and the traditional racial categories will simply dissolve throughout the West.

The writer is a London based independent journalist whose articles are published in 45 countries.

Correction

The Jordan Times would like to clarify that yesterday's article concerning the Senate's approval of the amendment of the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development Law, to incorporate the new title of "The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development," was wrongly attributed. The basis for the article was the official statement made by the fund itself and no other sources.

Letters to the editor

UNICEF does its best

WE, THE executive directors of UNICEF and the World Food Programme, together with the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, wish to express our disappointment over inaccurate and unbalanced criticisms by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) of Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) and its efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Sudan.

Against a backdrop of a 15-year civil war, OLS has been working to save millions of lives by providing emergency food, medicine, and access to clean water. In a report released last week by MSF, OLS is accused of responding slowly to last year's famine and has been criticised for instances of food diversion.

The issues raised are not new, and have been addressed over the past year by OLS, a consortium of U.N. and 40 non-governmental organisations.

In 1998, OLS members worked together to turn around the famine and reduce malnutrition rates from a high of 45-50 per cent down to 10-15 per cent in the most affected areas. While many lives were lost because of war and resulting famine, it is important to recognise that hundreds of thousands of lives were saved thanks to the emergency relief programmes of OLS and the generous support of the international donor community.

No one should ignore, that the responsibility for the war and famine in south Sudan lies squarely with the warring parties. While we recognise that humanitarian aid is not an adequate replacement for diplomacy, we believe that our foremost responsibility is to save lives. OLS currently supplies emergency aid to over 2.6 million of the most vulnerable. MSF's recent statements indicate that they believe OLS should cease functioning until a perfect system for access and distribution in Sudan is guaranteed. This is unrealistic. The result may be better consciences for some, but for the people of southern Sudan, the inevitable result would be further loss of life.

Increasingly, humanitarian aid is needed most in countries torn by civil and political conflict. Issuing public statements of principle and halting aid to victims of conflict may seem sensible. But most of us do not have that luxury. We have no choice but to save lives wherever we can.

The overriding imperative is to continue with the difficult but necessary humanitarian task, to negotiate with those who cause war on behalf of those who suffer from it — and, finally, to do our best to save innocent lives.

Executive Director, Carol Bellamy
Executive Director, Catherine Bertini
Emergency Relief Coordinator, Sergio Vieira de Mello
UNICEF
World Food Programme
U.N. Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

Letter of condolence

AT THIS period of personal grief over the sad demise of His Majesty King Hussein, I thought of writing to His Majesty King Abdullah, Queen Noor and other members of the Royal Family to convey our profound grief and sorrow over the loss of a great statesman of the Muslim World. The presence of so many heads of state and governments, testified to the greatness of the late King, and of course his presence in the Wye agreement, in spite of his poor health, has earned for him acclaim and gratitude not only from the Western and Arab World, but also from the Palestinians who have been struggling for the last 50 odd years for their legitimate rights.

I had the great honour of meeting the late King at a reception hosted by the Pakistani president on whose staff I was serving at that time, when he came on a state visit to Pakistan in 1969. I was wearing our Corps Blue Patrol Uniform and the mail chain on my shoulders, seeing which he remarked smilingly — "Ah Cavalry I presume" — and shook my hand warmly. It is a scene which remains etched in my memory! I had the good fortune to visit Amman a number of times and have many good friends there.

The funeral ceremonies as we watched on the television were magnificent in their simplicity and solemnity in the truest form of Islamic rites.

To His Majesty King Abdullah, who has ascended the Throne at a time when conditions in and around the country are fluid: all of us here including our prime minister who visited you recently, pray that Almighty Allah protect you and that you do not have to face the grave crises that your late father so magnificently handled in his youth.

May Allah guide you and keep the Royal Family, including the Crown Prince in good health and may you live long to care for your subjects. Amen.

Major General Iskander Karim
Dhaka
Bangladesh

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any issue they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld upon request but only under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing and abridging.

A century
Zionism
the Jewish

ate policy

Features

Continuing arms row could spell end for Northern Irish peace

By Elaine Monaghan
Reuters

"NOT A bullet. Not an ounce" is how the Irish Republican Army's attachment to its guns and explosives has been expressed in West Belfast graffiti.

"Never again" screams a mural recalling the burning of Roman Catholic homes on Bombay Street, where people live in the shadow of a metal wall — part of a peace line which shields both communities in Northern Ireland's main city from attack.

To the rest of the world, demands that the IRA prove its commitment to peace by disarming, or decommissioning as it is known in the province's peace accord, sound totally reasonable.

But to the IRA, they are a cynical request to surrender on its knees, spit on generations of sacrifice by its kin and concede defeat when it sees itself as undefeated in a noble fight to unite Ireland and end domination by Protestants.

The gulf drives a stand-off which is threatening the success of the Belfast Agreement signed on April 10 last year and has psychological, historical and political elements.

It seems there is little room for manoeuvre in the run-up to March 10, the target date for a transfer of some home rule to Belfast, the setting up of all-Ireland bodies and votes on whether to exclude from power anyone who failed to honour commitments on disarmament enshrined in the peace accord.

The peace deal, signed two days before Easter on Good Friday, which falls on April 2 this year, binds signatories to using all their influence to disarm guerrilla groups.

Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams and his chief lieutenant Martin McGuinness, the party's contact man on a decommissioning body led by Canadian general John de Chastelain, have pledged to do all they can to remove all the guns from Irish politics —

including those held by the party's military wing, the IRA.

But while most people remain optimistic that no one will walk away from the accord, previous peace efforts have foundered on the very issue of IRA disarmament.

"No one round here wants the IRA to decommission," said one man on the doorstep of his metal-shuttered house on Bombay Street, voicing a fear in Irish nationalist areas that they will be left defenceless if the outlawed organisation has no guns.

The province's Protestant leader David Trimble is in a tight spot. Under huge pressure, he has promised Protestants who are torn into two camps by the accord that Sinn Féin will not sit in a new executive until the IRA starts disarming — though the deal only sets a completion date for the process of May 2000.

His words are welcomed by Protestants on the other side of the peace line who will never forget the bombs that ripped through their community and distrust the IRA's July 1997 truce.

"For every date the Republicans cast up, we have one of our own," said May Blood, a community activist and member of the Women's Coalition Party who lives and works in the hardline Protestant heartland of the Shankill Road.

She remembers the houses burning on Bombay Street — but she also remembers her family being petrol-bombed out of its own home, not to mention a horrific catalogue of bombings inflicted on both communities at the height of the conflict.

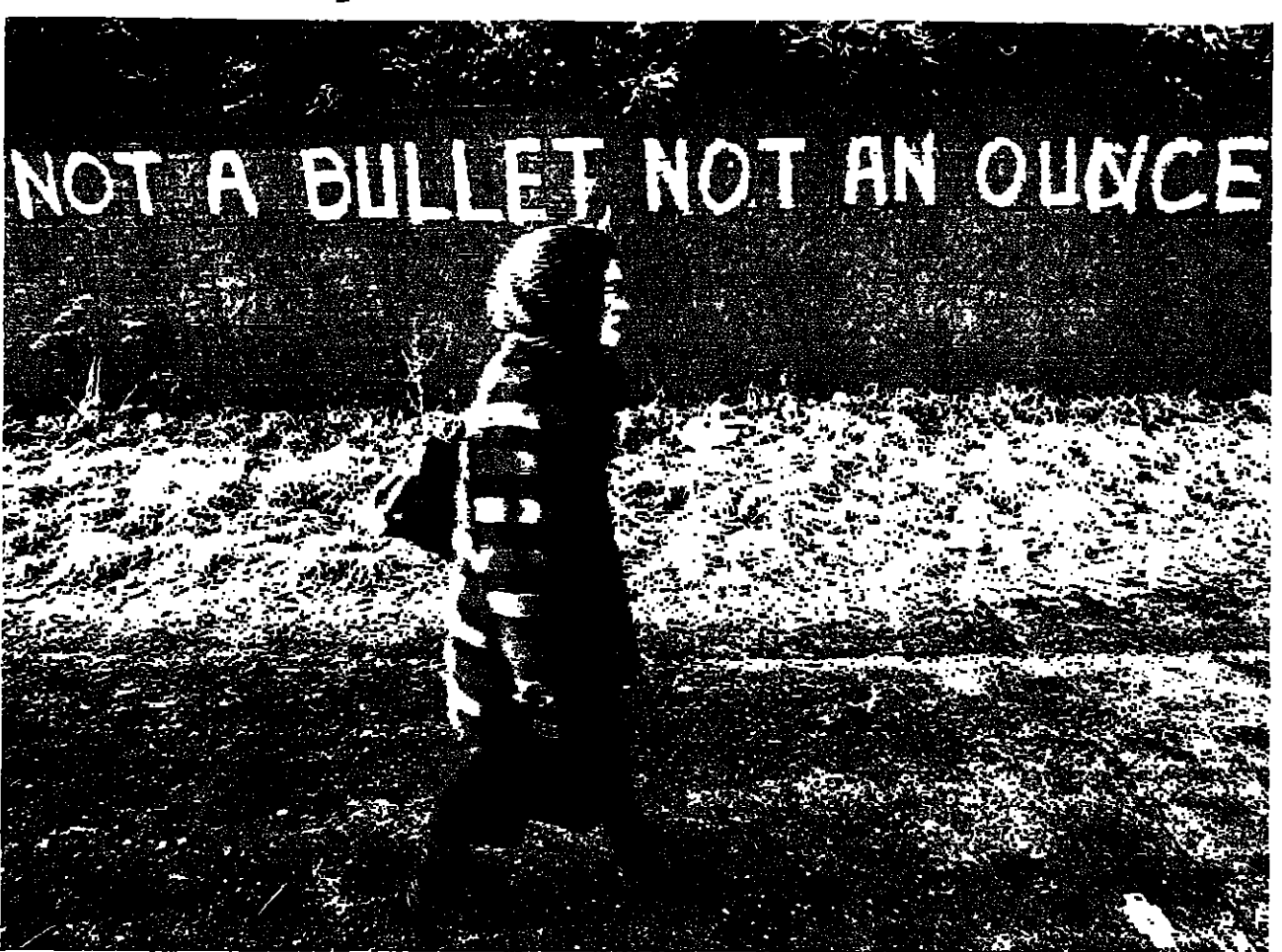
Sinn Féin is under pressure too. If it pushed for disarmament too soon, the IRA could rip apart, Republicans say.

The last split spawned the real IRA, which killed 29 people with a car bomb in the market town of Omagh last August.

And without its allies in the executive, the IRA would see little hope in all-Ireland bodies which Adams has convinced them could be an embryonic united Ireland.

Fears are rising that the disarmament stand-off could bring the peace deal tumbling down, or worse still break the long-standing ceasefire if the IRA loses patience with the political process.

The pro-British Loyalists on the other side of the 30-year conflict have also pledged to hold on to their guns, seeing themselves as defenders of their communities from IRA violence.



A woman walks in front of a wall showing graffiti in support of Irish Republicans in a west Belfast housing estate. The graffiti, which is an angry response from the IRA to demands to start decommissioning their weapons, comes after British Prime Minister Tony Blair wrote in two leading Belfast newspapers that a start to decommissioning would do more to create confidence between the two communities in Northern Ireland than any other single step (Reuters photo)

Republicans share a belief that the best solution to the problem which has dominated the political scene for months is simply to leave the guns to rot.

"The best decommissioning agent is rust," said Irish historian and writer Tim Pat Coogan, a leading IRA biographer.

"It's an Irish solution to an Irish problem," the Republican thinker added in an interview in which he warned that Trimble and the Irish and British prime ministers were messing with the ceasefires by pushing for disarmament.

Coogan noted that the men behind what is now Ireland's ruling Fianna Fáil party simply left their guns in the ground.

The latest embodiment of Irish republicanism sees itself as taking up where its Catholic kin in the South left off when they laid down their arms and picked up the reins of power in the Irish Republic at the island's partition in 1921.

Much of the havoc in a conflict which claimed more than 3,600 lives was wrought by home-made weapons concocted using household objects and simple fertiliser which can be put back into action as quickly as they are destroyed, Coogan noted.

"How do you decommission a jar of coffee?" he said.

"Two men with shovels in a County Fermanagh farmhouse can make up a thousand pound bomb and if they hear the police may be coming, they can decommission that in a space of 12 hours. Can you tell me this, how do you decommission shovels?" he said.

To those who have not grown up on a daily diet of violence and intimidation, as many members of Northern Ireland's Catholic and Protestant communities have, the idea of holding on to guns when a peace accord is being put into place is anathema.

But to Republicans, telling the IRA to disarm or forget its place at the power-hub of the new Northern Ireland is like kicking a sleeping dog to see if it barks.

A century of Zionism and the Jewish state

Zionism over a Hundred Years
Dr. Walid Al Khalidi
Dar Al Nahar Publishing House
Beirut 1998

DR. WALID AL KHALIDI is a very well-known Palestinian author. Currently a professor at Harvard University, he worked for many years as professor of history in the American University of Beirut. He wrote many books on Palestine and on the Palestinian tragedy of 1948 amongst which were: "From Haven to Refuge" and "Before the Diaspora — The History of the Palestinian people from 1876 to 1948".

Zionism over a Hundred Years covers four periods of Zionism: the first from the beginnings of Zionism in 1897 to 1917, the second from 1917 to 1948. The third period runs from 1948 to 1967 and the fourth from 1967 to 1997. 1897 is the year the Zionist Congress took place in Basle, Switzerland. At that time Herzl, the father of Zionism, stated that the Jewish state would see the light in fifty years. He also wrote a book in German titled Judenstaat (The Jewish state). The Zionist movement, according to the author, was originally a European Jewish one, the purpose of which was the immigration of Jews to Palestine for religious purposes. However, fundamentalist religious Jews were against Zionism on the grounds that the collective or wholesale return of Jews to Palestine was dependant upon God and the coming of the Messiah. Herzl, however, succeeded in creating the Zionist movement which subsequently won the support of secular Jews. It should be mentioned here that the idea of the creation of a Jewish state was not accepted by the Basle Congress which recommended instead the creation in Palestine of a 'home' for the Jewish people which would be

secured by public law.

The author also discusses European attitudes towards Zionism until the issue of the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917 by the British government, a document the Zionists came to rely on for the Jewish colonisation in Palestine. Secular Jews of Europe no longer objected to Zionism as a result of the Balfour Declaration, which removed the fear which lingered in their minds about dual loyalties: to the country in which they were living and a Jewish state.

Khalidi argues that at the peace conference of 1919 held in Paris after World War I, Zionist leaders played an important role in confirming the Balfour Declaration as part of the British Mandate over Palestine.

From 1922 to 1948 Zionism achieved two purposes: laying the foundation of the Jewish state with the full approval and support of the British mandatory power politically, administratively and legislatively and establishing that Jewish state itself in 1948.

The third period, from 1948 to 1967, sees the Jewish state firmly establishing itself. According to the author the Jewish state earned many advantages from the triple aggression of 1956 (Britain, France, Israel). Subsequently, Israel occupied the whole of Palestine in 1967. The fourth period, 1967 to 1997, is the period of the expansion of the Jewish state and its hegemony in the Middle East.

The author firmly relates Zionism and the Jewish state and vice-versa, and one can surely conclude that without the spread and force of Zionism in Europe and subsequently in the U.S., the Jewish state would not have been created.

Zionism over a Hundred Years is currently only published in Arabic.

Pascal B. Karmy

An alternative and lucid guide to Jerusalem guaranteed to make you want to go

Living Stones Pilgrimage with the Christians of the Holy Land: A Guide Alison Hilliard and Betty Jane Bailey Cassell (London), 1999 132 p., colour photos

JERUSALEM IS a place of many superlatives and splendid human deeds inspired by faith, and this book is one more example of excellence that emanates from that holy city. This book is unlike any other available today. It is designed, as the authors say in their introduction, as both an introduction to the history, traditions, and buildings of the main church denominations in the city, and as "alternative and more authentic way of exploring Jerusalem and its holy sites."

On both counts, it achieves its aims admirably, repeatedly startling the reader with fascinating facts of church history or traditions while also stimulating a strong desire to visit the many places mentioned in the text. More importantly, it provides a badly needed, factual and non-polemical affirmation of the rich human and spiritual reality of the Christians of Palestine, who maintain a continuous religious tradition going back to the days of Christ. One hopes that a similar book on Muslim traditions might also be produced soon, thereby giving visitors to the holy city a comprehensive picture of its Christian, Muslim and Jewish dimensions.

This is not a traditional guide book with detailed information and plans and drawings of sites. Rather, it is a general overview of and introduction to the Christian churches that are active in Jerusalem and Palestine, with detailed information on such things as times and places of services, special commemorations and ceremonies, and explanations of the most important traditions that one encounters in the city's Christian shrines.

Here, for example, you can learn more about the role of icons in Orthodox Churches, the symbolism of the Armenian priests' distinctive pointed hood head-dress, the church on the site where Christians first gathered in the decades after Christ's death, the stunning

frescoes in the Church of St. John the Baptist (probably the oldest in the city), and which monastery to visit if you want to say a prayer for St. Onuphrius, reputed to assist travellers by sea and those having trouble with court cases.

Most people who buy and use this fine little book will also buy a traditional touristic guide that gives detailed information about the many historic and religious sites in Jerusalem and Palestine/Israel (I recommend Jerome Murphy-O'Connor's excellent book for that purpose). In this volume, readers will learn about every denomi-

Book Review

nation and its churches and services, thus allowing for a more carefully planned visit to the holy city and its many spiritual sites.

The information provided is just enough to explain basic points of relevance to the visitor and to stimulate the appetite for a visit to the city, while keeping the book small enough to be carried and read during a walk through the city. The section on the icons and candles used in Greek Orthodox services, for example, is typically well written, concise and satisfying. It will forever enhance your visit to any such church.

Some of the most useful information is of the practical variety — where to find the best religious bookshops, to buy authentic Palestinian handicrafts, to find accommodations in church-owned pilgrims' resthouses, to interact with Palestinian Christians, and to attend church services in a variety of languages (including Aramaean, the language spoken by Jesus Christ). Several walking tours are also outlined, with a combination of practical directions, best times of year and day to make the trip, and the spiritual significance of it all.

These include the pilgrimage along the 14 stations of the Via Dolorosa (do your own trip or join the weekly trip led by the

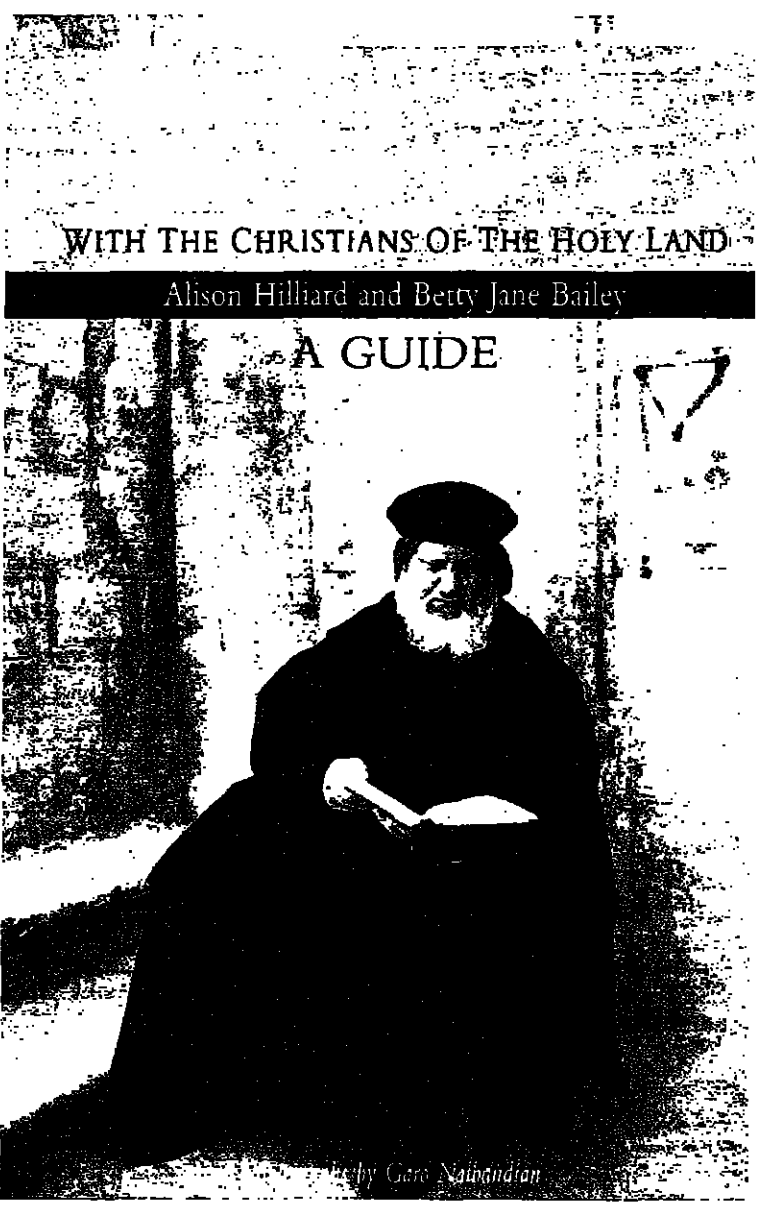
Franciscan monks of Jerusalem every Friday afternoon at 3 p.m.), a walk down the Mount of Olives, and a Holy Week walk retracing the steps of Jesus' last days.

The bulk of the book is very logically organised into sections on the separate churches, the Garden Tomb and Church of the Holy Sepulchre, "meditative pilgrimages" in Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine/Israel (Bethlehem, Nazareth, Sea of Galilee), and brief sections on other towns and villages in Palestine, such as Gaza, Bir Zeit, and Taybeh, among others.

The book finishes with mention and description of some annual celebrations, such as the Christmas and Easter Week festivities, commemorations of the Annunciation in Nazareth, St. George's Day celebrations at El Khadr village, and several others. The last section of the book points you to good places to buy locally made handicrafts and souvenirs and to sources of further information on the living Christian communities of the Holy Land.

This book was initially conceived as a project by the Jerusalem Liaison Office of the Middle East Council of Churches, whose director Harry Hagopian offers some information on Palestinian Christians today in his welcome remarks. He rightly makes the point that one of the aims of this book is to stimulate contacts between foreign visitors and the local Christian community, the "living stones" who trace their roots to Jesus' disciples and to the Church of the First Pentecost.

One of the important but very subtle sub-themes that runs through the book is the idea that the moral dictates of Jesus Christ's life and mission should stimulate visitors to the Holy Land to ponder the suffering, needs and rights of the people who live there today. This idea is poignantly expressed in some of the personal reflections by indigenous church leaders in the section on the Via Dolorosa, where each stop should prompt a pilgrim or visitor to reflect on what happened there in the days of Jesus and on how people today should react to the situation of



suffering that many suffer today in the Holy Land. This very subtle idea comes through the text here and there, and reminds us that religion is at its best and most relevant when it stimulates people to live better lives and to make better societies — when it prompts people to consider what they can do to alleviate suffering and injustice and promote righteousness and peace on earth.

The authors of this book are well equipped for their task. Alison Hilliard is Head of Religious Programmes for the BBC World Service and has lived in Jerusalem, while the Rev. Betty Jane Bailey has lived for years in Bethlehem as a representative of the United Church of Christ U.S.

The book was produced in collaboration with the Jerusalem Liaison Office of the Middle East Council of Churches, and is beautifully illustrated by the colour photographs of Garo Galbandian. It was officially launched in a ceremony in Jerusalem last week, and is available in bookshops there.

I recommend it without hesitation to people of all faiths. Read it before you next go to Jerusalem, and it will enrich your visit to the city and also expand your appreciation of the human and spiritual heritage that defines that very special place and its remarkable people.

Rami G. Khouri

New finance minister spells out Lebanon's economic malaise

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Lebanese economy is plagued by billions of dollars in public debt, a deep real estate crisis and expensive production costs, the country's new finance minister, Georges Corm, said in an in-depth interview recently.

"The black spots are the public debt and the real estate crisis, in addition to expensive production costs ... that cannot even meet regional competition," Corm told the French-language magazine "Le Commerce du Levant".

"The immediate objective is to stabilise the debt relative to expenditures and bring it down over the next five years from 115 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 80 per cent," he said.

The Lebanese economy has been reeling under a yawning budget deficit of 22 per cent of GDP and a public debt of \$18 billion piled up since the 1975-1990 civil war.

The U.S. financial company Merrill Lynch has urged the government to raise taxes, currently levied at just nine per cent of GDP, in its budget due by mid-March.

Merrill Lynch, which has handled much of the government's Eurobond issues since 1994, also urged faster privatisation of state-owned firms.

"The budget should include an explicit commitment concerning tax hikes, the introduction of value added taxes, which is an important source of revenue, and privatisation," said the firm in a report in Beirut.

Corm announced plans to raise state income by five per cent in the 1999 budget, as "there is no hope of reducing expenditures, because 80 per cent of the budget goes on debt servicing and salaries."

"First, we should improve tax collection as 70 per cent of the 245,000 tax payers do not declare their revenues and 72 per cent of companies declare losses," he said.

"We will also start progressively to introduce a value added taxation system and to abolish customs (60 per cent of revenues) to be able to join the World Trade Organisation and the Euro-Mediterranean partnership," he said.

Corm said the Lebanese economy had been in a depression since 1995 when the euphoric inflow of capitals, massively invested in the real estate and financial sectors following advances in the middle East peace process, withered away.

Lebanon's annual growth went down from seven per cent in 1994 to two per cent last year because about \$9 billion were frozen in deluxe properties and due to high annual interest rates on treasury bonds of between 16 and 22 per cent, he said.

Corm accused the successive governments of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri (1992-1998) of burdening the country with a "chronic budget deficit, waste of public funds and declarations with overestimated expenditures."

He said the country's debt has grown largely because of the expensive reconstruction policy carried out by Hariri, who was also the main drive behind the launch of Solidere, Lebanon's largest company. Shares of Solidere, the real-estate joint-stock firm entrusted with rebuilding war-ravaged downtown Beirut, have been facing pressure since Hariri's departure last November.

U.S. warns Japan to avoid deflation, shoulder burden of global growth

TOKYO (AFP) — U.S. Deputy Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers has warned Japan its economy appears to be worsening and it must avoid deflation.

Summers told the National Press Club of Japan it was critical that Tokyo recognise "the goal of price stability" includes "the responsibility to avoid deflation."

He said: "The government will need and appears determined to ensure the promised fiscal stimulus is fully implemented and sustained over the next few years."

But the boost delivered by Tokyo's economic rescue packages "should and I hope will be accommodated by monetary policy," said the senior U.S. financial official.

"And it will be important to think creatively about the best use of all the tools of macroeconomic policy," he added.

Official figures showed Japan's consumer prices fell 0.5 per cent month-on-month in January.

For the Bank of Japan, Summers said, "I believe that monetary policy choices going forward can have quite consequential effects for economic performance."

Last month, the Central Bank of Japan, under intense lobbying from Tokyo to ease monetary policy, said it would guide the overnight call rate — at which banks lead to each other — to 0.15 per cent or lower, from 0.25 per cent.

But it rejected calls for more government bond purchases.

The Japanese government was alarmed at the rise in bond yields, which peaked on Feb. 3 at 2.440 per cent, the highest since June 1997, and the damage higher interest rates could wreak on business and banks.

Noting Tokyo's economic rescue efforts, Summers said "it has nonetheless been troubling that ... if anything the uncertainties facing the economy have increased and growth forecasts have been

revised further downward." The senior U.S. official warned that global growth, aside from being tilted towards the risk of slow-down, was unbalanced with the United States running full tilt.

"United States imports from emerging Asia, for example, rose by close to \$12 billion last year, as compared with a nearly \$20 billion decline in Japanese imports from these countries," he said.

Washington would do everything possible to maintain growth, Summers promised. "But we cannot assume that the global economy will be able to fly permanently on a single engine."

Asked about the Japanese government's official forecast 0.5 per cent economic growth for the next fiscal year starting April 1, the deputy treasury secretary noted that most private forecasters expected contraction.

"I hope that perhaps the government's more optimistic forecast may reflect a conviction about policies that can be carried out of the course of the year ... that have not yet been announced," Summers said.

Such policy plans could not be reflected in private forecasts, he said.

But "my concern is great because I think it is an enormously important issue that Japan achieve economic growth."

"Certainly the available forecasts suggest that the establishment of a foundation for sustained growth on which can rely is a task that has not yet been fully completed," Summers added.

At a later meeting, Bank of Japan Governor Masaru Hayami told Summers the bank would refuse to buy new government bonds to help bring down long-term interest rates, a central bank official said.

"There was no request in the first place from Summers for the Bank of Japan's underwriting of new govern-

ment bonds or bond purchase operations" in the money market, a central bank official said.

"The Bank of Japan just explained to him about how we have and plan to carry out our own monetary policies," the official said.

Meanwhile, Japan's key economic advisory panel to Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi has outlined a 10-year recovery plan for the country's economy struggling in the worst postwar recession, government officials said.

The proposal was made in a final report to the premier by the Economic Strategy Council comprising business leaders and scholars after seven-month discussions, the officials said.

The panel's three-step strategy called for the government's focus on dispelling problems originating in the investment boom during the speculative bubble economy through early 1990s, they said.

The advisors warned Japan's economy was still weighed down by non-performing bank loans and debts resulting from heavy investments even nearly a decade after the asset-inflated bubble economy collapsed.

Tokyo needed to lay the groundwork for a fully-fledged recovery by resolving such long-held problems, the panel urged.

The panel recommended that Obuchi's cabinet begin tackling the government's huge debts in the second step by reducing fiscal spending for economic stimulus measures.

The central bank should keep its easy monetary policies to assist the economy's return to a growth path during this reform stage, the final report said.

Japan can target an annual economic growth of two per cent in the fiscal year to March 2002 by implementing the recommended reforms, it said.

In the final step, the panel expected the government to

revamp its deficit-ridden fiscal finances by balancing key expenditures with revenues and stepping up structural reforms.

Japan should be then ready for a full-scale economic recovery in 10 years, the panel said.

Obuchi welcomed the panel's report and vowed to implement as many recommended measures as he could.

"The report I received today, 'Strategies for Reviving Japanese Economy,' outlines the direction and principles of medium- and long-term economic management," Obuchi said in the panel's meeting.

"I am receiving the report as precious advises and move ahead with my economic management," the premier said.

"I will tell each minister my intention as such when the report is submitted to the cabinet and encourage them to start with what they can implement," he added.

The report called for a "drastic turnaround" in the central bank's stance towards monetary policies to assist the recovery effort.

It proposed that the Bank of Japan takes "all possible measures" such as increased purchases of government bonds as part of the bank's daily market operations to halt excessive rises in long-term interest rates.

The panel, however, was against the central bank's buying of new government bonds, an idea supported by many lawmakers as a way to bring down interest rates.

Hayami repeatedly rejected the pressure to buy new issues of state bonds which the government would depend on to help finance the national budget in the new fiscal year from April 1.

Recovery in East Asia still 'very, very fragile' — World Bank official

TOKYO (AFP) — An economic recovery in East Asia is still "very, very fragile," even though another wave of financial turbulence is unlikely, a senior World Bank executive has said.

"Economic recovery is very, very fragile and one should avoid any complacency," said Jean-Michel Severino, the World Bank's vice president for Asia-Pacific.

"The task ahead is very important," he told a news conference in Tokyo. "One is seeing some signs of economic recovery in the region and some sign that the external situation has stabilised," he said after three days of meetings in the Japanese capital with the bank's country directors from across the region.

Two crucial points, he noted, were the future of the Japanese economic situation and the prospects of growth in China.

This fragility, however, does not mean the countries rocked by the crisis in 1997 could face another wave of financial turbulence.

"This is unlikely but we are living in a very dangerous world as recent events in Russia and Brazil have demon-

strated and one has to stay extremely prudent," Severino said.

"The only insurance for those countries is the depth and the bullness of their structural reform programmes," he said. "They have started well in many countries but a lot remains to be done and we are encouraging the countries to focus on their programmes."

Severino noted the importance of restructuring the financial and industrial sectors, as well as following "good macroeconomic policies."

He also insisted on the need to improve social safety nets as a way of coming out of the crisis.

The director for Thailand, Jayasankar Shivakumar, for example, said: "Indicators show that the recession has bottomed out but that recovery has yet to happen."

There would be "very small growth this year but when exactly recovery will pick up is very difficult to assess," he added.

In South Korea, "confidence has been returning," said the country director M.G. Srinam Aiyer. But he admitted: "The real economy restructuring has only begun."

"Only now as big firms restructure, unemployment will continue to rise," he said.

It was now crucial to have a "contract between labour and government so that peace remains," he said. In addition South Korea was relying on strong demand from overseas for its products.

Meanwhile, the findings of an Asia Society poll of investors showed that Asia's financial crisis will continue until the middle of next year.

But the survey of Asian and U.S. investors also found the crisis presented good investment opportunities, said the society, a non-profit institution dedicated to fostering ties between Americans and the Asia Pacific.

Partial results of the Asia Society survey showed the "question of recovery is still foremost in most peoples' mind," said Urban Lehrer, executive editor of the Asian Wall Street Journal, which sponsored the poll.

Fifty-three per cent of the 505 respondents believe that a good time to invest in the region would be in the next three to six months, with 37 per cent saying they have already started planning for the expected upturn, he said.

"It's true that investors do not think that by and large, Asia's difficulties are over yet," Lehrer told a news conference here coinciding with an international business forum.

"People don't think it's over now. But the great majority of investors, almost everyone, thinks it will be over by the middle of next year," he said.

However, a majority of investors have already begun scouting for investment opportunities in the region, with 52 per cent picking up China as the most promising country.

Thailand, South Korea, Singapore and Philippines followed closely behind. Japan, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Indonesia were less attractive to investors, the survey showed.

Asia Society President Nicholas Platt said liberalisation policies, including pulling down tariff barriers, should be continued despite the crisis.

"I see it as a net plus, although some companies may have felt the pinch in tariff regulation," Platt, a former U.S. ambassador to the Philippines, said.

ILO: L. American unemployment to rise to record

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Unemployment across Latin America in 1999 is likely to rise to record levels due to a regional economic recession, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has said.

In a report released here the ILO estimates that unemployment in 1999 will reach a record 9.5 per cent — shattering the previous unemploy-

ment record of 8.7 per cent set in 1983.

In 1998, regional unemployment was at 8.4 per cent, up from 7.2 per cent in 1997, according to the report.

Latin economies need to grow at an annual rate of between five and six per cent to absorb the regional labour pool. But this is an unreachable short-term goal, according to the report.

Instead, economic policies in many Latin nations that prioritise high interest rates and tight credit are likely to result in slow economic growth and fuel inflation in 1999, according to the report.

Economic recession in turn makes Latin America unattractive to foreign investors, and as a result many Latin

nations are likely to have trouble meeting foreign debt payments.

This could lead to major foreign bail-out packages to avoid a regional economic collapse, the report said.

On average, in 1998 Latin economies grew 2.3 per cent, less than half the growth rate from 1997, according to the ILO.

THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

1 Rocky outcrop
4 Transfer image
9 Frown
14 Tankard filler
15 Greek market
16 Collier extension
17 Sobriquets
19 University of Maine town
20 Advocates of currency reform
22 Composer Saint
23 "Just the Way You..."
24 Pioneer filmmaker
25 Part of G.E.D.
26 Humorous Cleveland
29 Millennia
30 Play part
31 Declare
32 D.C. old-timer
34 Advocates of nationalism
40 Mandela's org.
41 Adam's grandson
42 Debt letters
43 S. American rodent
46 Messenger for Standish
48 Dial control
49 Expert
50 Fuss
51 Marsh grasses
52 Advocates of progressivism
57 Run the show
58 Stoneworks
60 Aired again
61 Follow in order
62 Dine
63 Derivative noise
64 Tractor maker
65 Mrs. in Madrid

5 Alaska's first governor
6 Search carefully
7 District
8 Indian sailor
9 Incline
10 "Vig"
11 City north of Lisbon
12 Continued
13 British insurance syndicate
18 Daily Planet reporter
21 Inert gaseous element
22 Fleeting spot
27 Cut the lawn
28 Possessed
29 Actor Wallace
31 Columnist
33 Exclamations of surprise
35 Jay follower
36 Single
37 Gay

38 Blimp name
39 U-boats
40 Cabin
41 Highland-games poles
42 Keen insight
43 Trademark fastener
47 Appeared threateningly

48 Deborah of film
49 Catkin
50 Hindu queen
51 Regan's father
54 Reasonable
55 Caesar's existence
56 Decant
59 RR stop

DRSPOCK STEERER
RETAKEER WELFARE
OARINIA EASTMAN
LER ETAGERE PST
LIEU SLATS GAME
EVANS STE AUGUR
RETIRED SNOWLESS
SPEED SAIL
ARMOIRES SNIPER
LEONA TER GNOME
LAMS GENES GREW
EDE PORTHOS TRE
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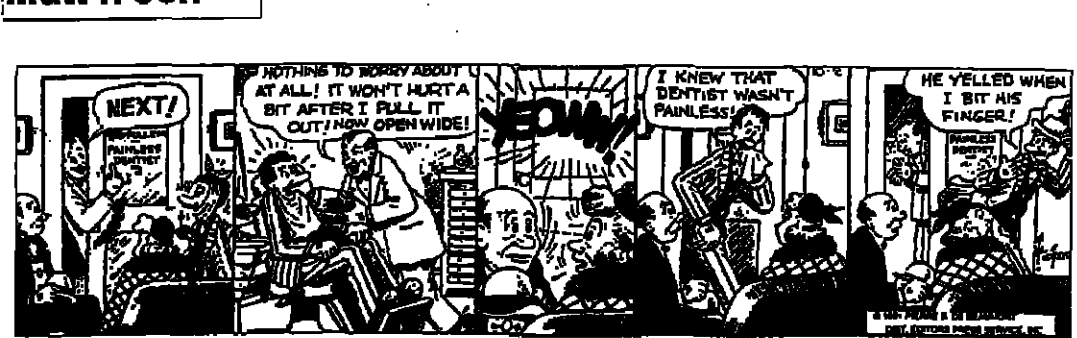
Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



JUMBLE THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

GEDUN
RICLY
UNDASE
GORUME

Wow! Gorgeous!

WHAT THE EXOTIC DANCER FACED EVERY DAY.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

A: THE

Yesterday's Jumbles: SYLPH FORAY LIMPID POLISH
Answer: Why he sold the garbage dump — HE HAD HIS 'FILL'

... Sunday, March 7, 1999
...oid deflation
...ial growth

Business & Finance

Jordan Times, Sunday, March 7, 1999 9

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Three per cent growth rate for this year seen unrealistic

**** COMMENTING ON** the possibility of achieving a three per cent economic growth this year, the secretary general of the Jordanian Communist Party said there is no indicator to support that possibility and, until now, a number of indicators point to a probability of weak growth. Munir Hamarneh, the secretary general who is also a professor of economics at the University of Jordan, attributed his expectation of weak growth to weak investments in productive sectors, the existence of huge and continued trade deficit and the absence of a climate capable of lifting the country from the deepening recession.

Hamarneh saw the policies, affecting the volume of investments, "operating in an opposite direction as the rise in sales tax leads to higher production costs and, consequently, weakens the capabilities of our industries to compete." He indicated that the main element to achieve growth lies in instigating local demand which cannot materialise unless individual incomes are raised and internal investment opportunities become available by lowering interest rates on credits.

"The present indicators confirm weak growth unless there are some surprises," Hamarneh concluded.

Economic analyst Mazen Marji described the talk about growth rates as "far from reality" saying that the "series of misleading and covering up on real data was continuing from one government to another." He expressed hope that capable officials would be brought to face realities in an indication that a three per cent

growth rate cannot be achieved. Marji said the highest growth rate expected for 1998 does not exceed 1.4 per cent even before taking into consideration the inflation rate which is more than four per cent and the population growth which is no less than 2.7 per cent.

The analyst casted doubt over the credibility of the Tarawneh government for announcing that the economic reform programme was completed and then announcing a new three-year programme described as "national." He went on to criticise the previous government for hinting that the Social Productivity Programme would be completed by soft loans from the World Bank and then "being surprised that the bank would only be financing refugee camps through high interest loans."

Furthermore, Marji said, "the (Tarawneh) government did not take any precaution for an increase in trade deficit and thus placed itself at the mercy of external circumstances."

Marji explained that none of the local investment sectors was "moving" and that the volume of investments coming from abroad was weak. Stressing that the man on the street did not reap any of the fruits of peace he asked: "Where were will growth come from?"

Nabil Wahbeh, a senior banker at the Jordan National Bank, said talk about a three per cent growth rate is exaggerated. "I don't believe it reached one per cent last year," Wahbeh stressed (Al Arab Al Yawm).

Experts: Millennium bug may disrupt world trade

MANILA (Agencies) — There will be no falling planes and sinking ships but mass transport disruptions resulting from the Millennium bug computer glitch could severely affect world trade, experts have warned.

"The big issue here would be more on the lines of gridlock, meaning that for big shipping companies, they may not be able to ship from part of a specific country to another," said Deborah Schaibly of the U.S.-based Madame Millennium Consulting Inc.

"The damage is going to take an entire range, whereby in some areas you may have minimal problems while in some the problems will be totally devastating," Schaibly told an international conference here.

Her company's clients include leading shipping companies engaged in coal and grain transport.

The expert said major transport infrastructure, especially in advanced economies, rely heavily on computer systems that plot routes, traffic and destinations.

While a majority of transport firms have begun putting in place contingency measures, "there is not enough time" to completely counter the problem, Schaibly said.

Ricardo Valderama, chief executive officer of a risk management consultancy in the United States, said project managers assigned by firms to terminate the so-called Millennium bug often complained of "limited amount of authority" in dealing with the problem.

It has been found that fewer than 14 per cent of all (such) projects in the United

States are completed on time, he said.

He advised companies to provide a "realistic range" of deadlines to arrive at solutions against the glitch, also known as Y2K, which will start impacting on older computer systems less than 10 months from now.

Schaibly said widespread fears that planes would fall off the skies and ships would be lost at sea due to computer glitch had no factual basis, stressing that there was a "very slim chance" of it happening.

"This is not realistic although it has shock value to it," she said. "Banks will not lose your money, planes will not fall off and ships will not be lost on high seas. There are going to be glitches and ups and downs along the way but that does not mean the world is coming to an end."

Older-generation computers are programmed to read only the last digits of date and may not be able to distinguish the year 1900 to the year 2000.

There have been widespread fears this could ultimately lead to massive disruptions on sensitive sectors including finance, transportation and even governments.

Schaibly said nothing should be left to chance, stressing that firms "need to make sure that their businesses are safe, their employees are safe."

She urged companies to plan ahead and give priority to issues concerning the problem and ensure that contingency measures are in place during system breakdowns arising from Y2K problem.

"If you lose one ship of coal that is one issue, but if

you lose a ship full of people is another one far greater than the first," she said.

"The real danger is that this will result to production slowdowns and gridlocks, economic losses and legal liabilities to companies" that failed to put in place measures to combat the problem, she added.

The chief organiser of the international conference on the problem said the total cost of tackling the Millennium bug, including legal fees resulting from lawsuits, is expected to mount to \$1.3 trillion.

Amable Aguiluz, who also heads the Philippines' effort to address the Y2K bug, said global agencies should be put on alert to be ready to assist countries and sectors vulnerable to the bug.

Aguiluz said a U.S.-based computer consultancy agency, the Gartner Group, had estimated it would cost some \$600 billion to convert computer systems so they can overcome the bug.

Legal fees from lawsuits over the bug could rise to \$700 billion, he told a news conference here.

Aguiluz warned that even this figure was rapidly increasing as the cost of computer programmers charged with making computers Y2K-compliant had been steadily rising ahead of the new Millennium.

Meanwhile, a U.S. Senate panel has warned that the year 2000 computer bug may set off civil unrest in poor countries, undermine economic growth in Asia, Latin America and Africa, and disrupt global trade in oil and other commodities.

It added that while there was a low probability of an accidental nuclear weapons launch, missile systems in

other countries could malfunction and terrorists, taking advantage of weakened security, could strike next Jan. 1.

But Robert Bennett, chairman of the Senate's special committee on the computer problem, said U.S. intelligence services would be ready.

"The U.S. military may experience some minor disruptions, but its mission-critical, war-fighting capability will not be compromised," he told a news conference after releasing the panel's report.

The problem is that many computers as now configured cannot recognise the year 2000. If not fixed, many computers will read "00" as 1900. That could cause many computers to crash or malfunction come Jan. 1, 2000.

Within the United States, Y2K disruptions could be minimised, Bennett said.

The committee said the most serious computer problems would likely strike other countries next Jan. 1.

"There is a low to medium probability of terrorist exploitation of Y2K. However, we must remain vigilant in case some of our security systems malfunction," Bennett told senators at a closed-door briefing.

"There is a medium probability of economic disruptions that will lead to civil unrest in certain sectors of the world, particularly where their economies are already fragile or there is political uncertainty," he said.

There was a "high probability" of economic disruptions in Latin America, Africa and Asia, Bennett added.

The report singled out Japan, Mexico, China, Germany and Taiwan for falling nine months to two years behind schedule in preparing for the year 2000 bug. The committee also said that major oil producers Venezuela and Saudi Arabia were 12 to 18 months behind schedule.

"Disruption of flights and global trade between some areas and countries may occur," the report added.

The report said that "the committee has no data to suggest that the United States will experience nationwide social or economic collapse, but the committee believes that some disruptions will occur, and that in some cases Y2K disruptions may be significant."

It said the U.S. health care system may be least prepared because rural and inner-city hospitals were at high risk of computer failures. The nation's medicare system was in "serious trouble," it said.

The committee said that U.S. airports started preparations too late and that shipments of goods by sea could be disrupted because the maritime industry was running behind. A prolonged nationwide blackout was unlikely, although local and regional outages were possible, it said.

In case vital services were temporarily cut off, the committee said Americans should consider stocking up on bottled water, canned goods and other essentials, as they might to prepare for a winter storm lasting two to three days. The report said people should also keep copies of their financial records in case banks run into unforeseen problems.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR SUNDAY, MARCH 7, 1999

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) A lunch date could lead to romance. If you're not in a relationship, get close to someone you'd like to start one with. It's a good afternoon to begin a group project. Try a bigger challenge than ever before. You need something like that to keep you interested.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Make your major decisions as early as possible. Don't procrastinate. Later in the focus shifts to financial matters. It may seem like there's not enough money to do what you want. Remember that old line about necessity being the mother of invention? Necessity is pushing you to try new things. One of them is bound to work.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) If your work's done, you might be able to travel this weekend. How about skiing at Tahoe, or perhaps the Swiss Alps? This won't happen if you've been goofing off. Put in the correction, and next time this condition comes around, it's off to the Alps for you. Meanwhile, back to work.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) A friend can help you solve a difficult problem this morning. Talk it over with one who's more predictable than you are. This person had had the same lifestyle for longer than you can remember. Your problem is that things in your life are changing. If you need a little stability, go to one who has a lot of it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Complete a project this morning. You'll make a good impression on an older person and increase the money coming in. This afternoon, you'll have more chance to socialise. That's also your best opportunity for romance. In fact, it may find you. It looks like your partner is in an aggressive mood. This could be interesting.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Ask for what you want early this morning. Later, everything gets confusing. Your boss or teacher or parent will order you to do one thing, then expect you to have something else done at the same time. Don't you get frazzled too. Instead, help this person get organised. That will make both of your lives a lot easier.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) The morning starts out slow, but the days gets better. By afternoon, you should be doing pretty well. You'll be able to find just the right words, especially with loved ones and children. You'll also be firm and decisive, so watch what you say. You'll have to keep any agreements you make this evening.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You could get a good opportunity this afternoon. If you have your budget figured out, you'll know how much you can afford to spend. Money is not necessarily tight, but it never hurts to spend it wisely. The time you spend planning earlier in this day will show up as money saved later.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Things will fall together this morning, and money might even fall into your pocket. It's not from winning the lottery. It's from work you've done recently. Celebrate at lunch with your favourite person. Choose a date who can teach you something. It looks like love and learning are linked right now.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your life should start moving faster around the middle of the day. It might seem like you have too much to do, but that's never stopped you before. You're probably finding it exciting. Don't forget to get the clients to sign on the dotted line. If you forget something today, the mistake could be an expensive one.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A problem you've been struggling with starts to ease around the middle of the day. The solution either becomes obvious, or you simply stop caring. Your interest shifts to romance tonight, and it's about time. You've done without it for long enough. Set up a dinner date. You and your sweetheart have a lot to talk about.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Spend the morning studying, so you can handle a difficult situation this afternoon. It's not as hard as it is confusing. You want to ask everyone else's opinion, but you need to make sure your own interests are protected. You tend to do what everybody else wants. That's admirable, but not really necessary.

Birthday of March: Aquamarine — Jasper.

Giant mergers may startle, but big isn't necessarily bad

NEW YORK (AP) — A few years ago, a merger of Exxon and Mobil might have seemed as unlikely as, say, a professional wrestler being elected governor.

Now eye-popping mergers of giant corporate rivals are commonplace. But to anyone who fears that a handful of companies will soon take over the world, business experts say global competition is just too strong.

"As big as companies might seem today, actually the large companies are a smaller fraction of the market than they were 20 and 30 years ago," said Jeremy Siegel, professor of finance of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School of Business.

The merger frenzy has swept through a variety of industries, with

many companies seeking to expand in the United States, and in developing Asian and European markets.

The quest for size and global reach has been accompanied by a focus on efficiency and cost-cutting as giant rivals combine and then slash their overlapping businesses and employees.

The oil industry, in particular, has seen huge mergers as companies look for areas to slash costs and boost profits amid a deep global slump in prices.

Financial institutions are combining in efforts to provide customers with a broad new array of services from checking accounts to insurance to investment advice.

Since a 1996 law freed local, long-distance and cable companies to pursue each other's businesses, phone

companies have been scrambling to merge.

"The result has been an array of mergers creating headlines as startling as Minnesota Gov. Jesse 'The Body' Ventura, a former pro wrestler, namely deals between Exxon and Mobil, Daimler-Benz and Chrysler, America Online and Netscape Communications."

Travelers and Citicorp, and NationsBank and BankAmerica.

"I've long since gotten over the thought that any deal should be unthinkable," said Herald Ritch, co-head of mergers and acquisitions at Donaldson, Lufkin and Jenrette.

Some companies are trying to restore past dominance, and break into new markets.

AT&T is the best example, as the former long-distance monopoly has lost half its

share of that market since being broken up by the government in 1984.

AT&T is now trying furiously to crack into the local phone business and is buying cable giant Telecommunications Inc. with a plan to one day deliver phone and Internet services through televisions.

While the combination of heavyweights might seem an unfair concentration of power, government regulators have determined that big deals do not necessarily create antitrust problems.

For instance, NationsBank was allowed to buy BankAmerica, WorldCom bought MCI, Boeing bought McDonnell Douglas.

But the Washington watchdogs have forced some companies to sell

off piece of themselves if they would dominate specific markets.

Exxon and Mobil, for instance, will probably have to sell off gas stations and refineries in regions where, together, they would dominate the market.

In some cases, the feds have blocked deals entirely in less competitive industries.

In the past year and a half, regulators quashed proposed mergers between office-products retailers Staples and Office Depot, defence giants Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman, and the nation's top four drug wholesalers.

With Wall Street reviving from its summer slumber and once again letting companies use their high-priced stocks as currency to acquire rivals, regulators will have to be prepared for a heavier onslaught.

From electrical utilities to entertainment companies, merger watchers say the boom will continue as long as the stock market remains strong. And in the wake of deals such as Daimler-Benz and Chrysler.

British Petroleum, Amoco and Deutsche Bank-Bankers Trust, big names will be coming together on a global scale.

Henry Jacoby, a management professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, pointed to Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. media conglomerate and U.S. auto giants General Motors and Ford as companies that could be looking to strengthen their European operations.

"Let your imagination run," said MIT's Jacoby.

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World Indoor Athletics Championships

Fredericks scoops 200m gold in title chase

MAEBASHI (AFP) — Namibian sprinter Frankie Fredericks scooped the 200 metre gold at the World Indoor Athletics Championships on Saturday as he embarked on an end-of-career title chase.

The 31-year-old Fredericks led from start to finish to beat Obadele Thompson of Barbados and defending champion Kevin Little of the United States in 20.11sec.

Olympic pole vault champion Jean Galfione won his contest but there was mass confusion and American protests in the Maebashi Green Dome after he twice appeared to touch the bar during his winning jump.

Romania got a golden double when Ionela Tirlea won the women's 200 metres while Gabriela Szabo won the 1,500m. Szabo will also aim to win the 3,000m for a third time on Sunday.

Fredericks was making a rare appearance at the championships, though he has the indoor 200m world record of 19.92sec.

"At this time of my life I am just chasing titles. I am trying to wrack up as many as I can. It is near the end of my career and the titles are what you are remembered for."

Like Colin Jackson, who won the 60m hurdles on Friday, Fredericks is an under-achieving legend in his sport. Like the British hurdler, his only other major title was at the world outdoor championships in 1993.

Fredericks has four Olympic and four world championship medals. But no-one has run as many legal sub-10sec runs.

"I will try to do the best I can at the World Championships and then it is important to get the gold medal at the African Games," he said.



Frank Fredericks of Namibia, flanked by Barbados' Obadele Thompson (L, silver) and Kevin Little, of the U.S. (R, bronze), shows off the gold medal after winning the men's 200-metre run at the World Indoor Athletics Championships in Maebashi. Fredericks timed 20.10 seconds (Reuters photo)

But he is not yet sure to go to the Sydney Olympics. "I am going to take it one year at a time," he insisted. France got its first title of the championships through Galfione but the pole vault hero had to wait for a jury verdict before claiming his gold.

Galfione touched the bar as he cleared 6.00m on his second attempt during his duel with American Jeff Hartwig for the title. The jury reviewed a video and said it was an accident, sparking an official protest which was rejected.

There were jeers and boos from the crowd when a slow motion replay was played on the screen. At one stage it was accidentally announced that Galfione had been disqualified. The runway was closed for 10 minutes before Hartwig tried and failed at 6.00m.

Galfione also tried 6.05m, still uncertain whether his 6.00m jump would count.

Hartwig's 5.95m was a

new American record but he said: "The whole confusion took the crowd out of it, it took me out of it and I lost all momentum." he said the competition had been "disturbing."

Danny Ecker of Germany was third on 5.85m with defending champion Igor Potapovich of Kazakhstan equal fourth with Jose Manuel Arcos of Spain.

Galfione pleaded innocence and said the storm probably cost his attempt on 6.05m. "I touched the bar but there was no intention to help myself," Galfione insisted.

"But how can you beat the feeling of winning. Even the confusion and doubt about whether I put the bar back on my way down from the jump cannot dull my feeling elation," said the Frenchman.

Romania's Szabo ruthlessly won the women's 1,500 metres, surging on the final lap to win in a championship best time of 4min 03.23sec, ahead of

fellow Romanian Violeta Beclea-Szekely and Lidia Chojecka of Poland. But Szabo did not acknowledge Beclea-Szekely nor take the time to congratulate compatriot Tirlea for winning the women's 200m.

"Athletics is about individuals not teams and countries," she said. "Inside the stadium I do not think about my mother or my father nor my friends. I fight for a medal and everyone else is my enemy who must be beaten."

The performance may have been cold but the 25-year-old Romanian was impressive and she is determined to get the 3,000m on Sunday and beat the 10 year old world record in the event.

Vita Pavlysh of the Ukraine won the women's shot put with a championship record throw of 21.43m. Tatyana Kotova of Russia took the women's long jump with 6.86m.

Asia's fastest man gives award back

MAEBASHI (AFP) — Koji Ito, Asia's fastest man, on Saturday donated part of a \$100,000 prize from last year's Asian Games to the Thai host nation.

Ito gave \$10,000 from his most valuable athlete award to Thai charities after coming fifth in the 200 metres final at the world indoor championships here.

The 29-year-old Japanese sprinter, who won three golds at the Asian in Bangkok in December, twice set a new Asian record time in the heats in Maebashi, shaving it to 20.95sec.

In the final, won by Namibian superstar sprinter Frankie Fredericks, Ito clocked 20.95sec.

"My mind was in a panic. I pushed too much on the straight and the corner was so tight it was hard to negotiate," said Ito.

"I was more tense than at the Asian Games," said



France's Romain Mesnil in action during the men's pole vault final at the World Indoor Athletics Championships in Maebashi. Mesnil ended up in a joint fourth position together with Spain's Jose Manuel Arcos, Kazakhstan's Igor Potapovich and Germany's Andrei Tivontschik with 5.70 metres (Reuters photo)

the Japanese, who will also run 60 metres on Sunday. "I really did not want them to believe my performance at the Asian Games was just a fluke."

Ito became the first Asian to clock 10.00sec over 100m at the Asian Games.

Mutola determined to win record 4th gold

MAEBASHI (AP) — She's already done it three times, but a record-breaking fourth would be sweeter still. "Going for a record-breaking win, for the fourth time, means a lot to me," Maria Mutola, the 1993, 1995 and 1997 champion in the women's indoor track 800 metres, said Saturday. If she wins the gold in the finals Sunday at the World Indoor Championships, she will be the first woman to win four track championship golds.

"It's not that easy. There are a lot of people running good," she said. But she came a step closer by easily winning her semifinal at 2 minutes and 2.18 seconds, although that was slower than her best of 1:57.06. She said she was saving her best for the finals. "What's important is the finals," said the runner from Mozambique.

American Michelle di Muro-ave — who ran with Mutola in the semifinals and finished sixth — said she wished Mutola the best. "She's just such a fantastic athlete," she said. "She's a very nice girl."

Going for the cash — A little extra incentive never hurt. The championships offer a bit of that with cash prizes for the medalists — \$50,000 for the gold, \$20,000 for the silver and \$10,000 for the bronze. The money is all courtesy of the International Amateur Athletic Federation. An athlete who breaks the world record receives \$100,000.

Romanian Ionela Tirlea, who won the gold in the 200 metres, said she hadn't given the cash much thought. "But I will spend it," she said with a smile. American Deon Minor, who has a chance for a medal when he runs in the relay Sunday, the final day of the championships, said he hadn't thought much about the money either.

"As far as the cash, I'm not thinking about that now. I just want to go out and make sure we make it to the finals," he said. "You have to take it one day at a time."

Volunteers are a crowd — although spectator attendance has been less than ideal at the championships, there are 700 volunteers from the local Maebashi community, far more than organisers had hoped for. But as in many such big events, many of the volunteers aren't getting the experience they had hoped for — a chance to practice their English or see the athletes up close.

Ayako Akiba, a 21-year-old English major at college, said she had given directions maybe a couple of times in English so far. She has been so busy she has watched all the competition on TV at the monitors placed throughout the venue. Still, she doesn't regret having volunteered.

"It's such a rare opportunity to be able to work at such a big world event, although no one seems to know about it," she said.

Tyson receives 60 more days in prison

INDIANAPOLIS (AFP) — Jailed former heavyweight champion Mike Tyson Friday had 60 days added to his current sentence by the judge who presided over his 1992 rape conviction.

Currently serving a one-year sentence in Maryland for assaulting two motorists following a traffic accident in August, Tyson had two months tacked on by Marion County circuit court Judge Patricia Gifford as part of an arrangement with prosecutors, according to court officials.

Gifford found that the incident in Maryland was a violation of Tyson's parole for the rape conviction, which saw him serve three years at the Indiana Youth Centre until March 1995.

Upon his release, Tyson was placed on four years probation.

Under the arrangement signed Friday, Tyson admitted he violated the parameters of his parole. The additional 60 days will run consecutively to Tyson's current sentence, which began February 5.

Although he was sentenced to one year imprisonment plus another year as a suspended sentence, Tyson, 32, anticipated a release this summer which would have allowed him to resume his disgraced career.

However, Tyson is in the midst of a 25-day stint in solitary confinement in the Montgomery County jail in Rockville, Maryland, following a prison incident in which he smashed a television set. The loss of reduced time for good behaviour plus Friday's two-month sentence figures to push back his potential release to no earlier than autumn.

Ironically, Friday was the last day for Tyson to have



Mike Tyson

appealed the Maryland sentencing, an unlikely strategy. A successful appeal after his original "no contest" plea only would have gotten him a trial, and a conviction could have put him in jail for 20 years.

Tyson also was sentenced to 200 hours of community service, a \$5,000 fine and two years probation on the assault charge. The sentencing could affect his ability to retain his boxing licence in Nevada, which expires December 31, 1999.

The Nevada Athletic Commission initially had concerns over the Maryland incident when reissuing Tyson a licence in October. Tyson was suspended by the commission on July 9, 1997, 11 days after twice biting Evander Holyfield during a heavyweight title fight.

The commission forced Tyson to undergo psychiatric evaluation, which further

publicly embarrassed the fallen champion. At his sentencing in Maryland last month, Tyson did not testify but presented seven witnesses on his behalf and a video highlighting his public service.

Tyson also claimed any jail time would cost him everything and that he needs to fight to pay off considerable financial debts. He also reiterated his apology to the victims, but to no avail.

Between the restoration of his licence and his sentencing in Maryland, Tyson scored a fifth-round knockout of Francois Botha on January 16. Despite his myriad problems, he remains one of boxing's hardest punches and biggest attractions.

In 1986, Tyson became the youngest heavyweight champion at age 21. Six years later, he was convicted of raping Desiree Washington.

Holyfield promises 3rd round win over Lewis

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Evander Holyfield Friday said he would knock out Lennox Lewis in the third round of their fight for the undisputed world heavyweight title, a vow he said was not a prediction, but a promise.

"It's not a prediction," said a supremely confident Holyfield, who was in Los Angeles to promote pay-per-view sales and appear on the tonight show chat show.

"The weatherman predicts," he said. "I know I'm going to knock Lennox out."

The fight at storied Madison Square Garden will bring together the titles of boxing's three major sanctioning bodies for the first time since Riddick Bowe dumped the World Boxing Council (WBC) belt in a trash can on Dec. 14, 1992.

Holyfield, normally a model of humility, has never before promised to win in a particular round.

"The reason why I made that statement — I want people to know I'm so confident," said Holyfield, holder of the World Boxing Association and International Boxing Federation crowns.

"I've been doing this for 28 years and 17 weeks," he said. "I'm to the point where I know what I'm doing."

Holyfield, 36, brings a record of 36-3 with 25 knockouts. For 19 months in 1991 and 1992 he reigned as the undisputed champion before

losing to Bowe and beginning the fragmentation of the title.

Despite two victories over Mike Tyson and victories over the only two men to conquer him in the ring, Holyfield needs to beat Lewis to secure his place among such undisputed legends as Muhammad Ali, George Foreman and Tyson.

"I'm saying I'm going to knock Lennox Lewis out," Holyfield said. "I don't take anyone for granted. I trained. I trained hard. I'm better than I've ever been."

Lewis, 33, is the WBC champion. He brings a record of 34-1 with 27 knockouts to the fight.

The Jamaican-born Briton took a pre-fight poke at Holyfield when he called the Evangelical Christian a hypocrite in the wake of revelations that Holyfield has fathered nine children with six women.

"I'm not a hypocrite," Holyfield said. "A hypocrite is a person who quits. I have made mistakes."

"Just as I have to work hard to be the heavyweight champion of the world, I have to work just as hard to be the man God wants me to be."

Holyfield, by turns serious and jocular as he met the press on Friday — prior to taping the television show and then taking in the Los Angeles Lakers basketball game — said Lewis' remarks hadn't made the fight a personal grudge match.

But he was unwavering in his certainty that he would emerge from the

fight with the undisputed title.

"I'm not saying there's something wrong with his character," he said of Lewis. "He wants to win. He's going to fight hard. That's what's going to keep him in until the third round."

Holyfield declined to speculate on his schedule after the fight, although he acknowledged that Henry Akinwande would be due a bout after stepping aside for this one.

The man who will always be linked to Tyson as the victim of the infamous bite fight, also brushed off queries about Tyson's current legal woes.

The former world champion, jailed for assault over a Maryland traffic accident, Friday had two months added to his current sentence by the Indiana judge who presided over his 1992 rape conviction.

Judge Patricia Gifford found the Maryland incident was a violation of Tyson's parole for the rape conviction, for which he served three years in prison.

"Mike has to handle his business and I have to handle mine," Holyfield said with a shake of his head. "I think I'll be better served in this fight if I just handle my business."

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Mutola determined to win record 4th gold

LOCAL SPORTS SCENE



Aridah holds talks in Tunisia

AMMAN — Isam Aridah, director of 9th Pan-Arab Games (Al Hussein Tournament) is currently in Tunisia inspecting preparations for the Mediterranean Games, which will be held in 2001 with 23 countries including Jordan taking part. Aridah briefed Tunisian Youth and Childhood Minister Mohammad Najjar on the Kingdom's preparations for Amman's Aug. 15-31 Pan-Arab Games and His Majesty King Abdullah's concern about the arrangements and new sport constructions currently under way. Najjar stressed his country's support to provide all available experience and support for the event's success.

Website for Al Hussein Tournament

AMMAN — In order to promote the 9th Pan-Arab Games (Al Hussein Tournament) and provide services to all parties concerned in its development, a website on the activity will be set up for that purpose. The Games' Public Relations Department will hold a meeting with a specialised company to discuss the issue.

Basketball officials off to Beirut

AMMAN — President of the Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) Mudar Majdoub and Fadi Zreigat, a member of the Orthodox Club's board of directors, leave for Lebanon to coordinate about the national team's participation in the West-Asian Clubs Championship to be hosted here by Al Orthodoxy. Majdoub said an official meeting with the secretary general of the West-Asian Federation will take place in Beirut. The national team will also begin a seven-day training camp in Lebanon March 15 and play friendlies against a number of Lebanese teams.

Kick Boxing gets another JD7,000

AMMAN — The Jordan Olympic Committee decided to add JD7,000 to the JD27,000 budget requested by the National Kick-Boxing Federation to prepare the national team for the 9th Pan-Arab Games. The increase will enable the team to take part in training camps, upgrade players' skills and provide equipment.

Al Saeed to be nominated for prize

AMMAN — In commemoration of the late Nazmi Al Saeed, one of Jordan's sports pioneers who passed away last year, the national football and sports media federations will soon nominate Al Saeed for the annual prize of the Arab Soccer Federation for his 40-year services. Mohammad Jamil Abdul Qader, Mohammad Saad Shanjiti, Bassam Haroun are also nominated for the award.

Compiled by Ahmad Khatib

Williams opening-day winner at Evert Cup

INDIAN WELLS, California (AFP) — Fresh off her first tournament victory, Serena Williams of the United States exhibited her winning form Friday in opening-round action at the \$1.25 million Evert Cup. Williams, who won her first career singles title Sunday at the Open Gaz de France, held off South African Jessica Steek 6-1, 7-5, in 67 minutes.

The 17-year-old Williams returned to her native California after taking part in an historic weekend. After Serena beat Australian Open finalist Amelie Mauresmo in the final in Paris, older sister Venus won the 19th Superthrift Tennis Classic in Oklahoma City as the two became the first sisters in WTA Tour history to win titles in the same week.

Serena is playing in just her fourth tournament of the year and improved to 9-2 with her victory over Steek, who was making only her second appearance in a WTA Tour main draw. Next up for Williams is second seed and 1997 champion Lindsay Davenport of the United States.

Davenport, a finalist here a year ago, has not played since a quarter-final loss to Amanda Coetzer of South Africa at the Pan Pacific Open and has been battling a persistent head cold. She is 12-3 with a tournament win in Sydney. In other matches on Friday, 10th-seeded Patty Schnyder of Switzerland, who had lost three of her previous four matches, defeated Tamarine Tanasugarn of Thailand, 6-3, 6-4, 13th seed and 1997 runner-up Irina Spirelea of Romania overcame Germany's Andrea Glass, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/4), 14th

seed and two-time finalist Conchita Martinez of Spain opened only her third event of the year with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-2 win over Belgium's Sabine Appelmans, and Lilia Osterloh of the United States ousted No. 16 Barbara Schett of Austria 6-4, 6-4.

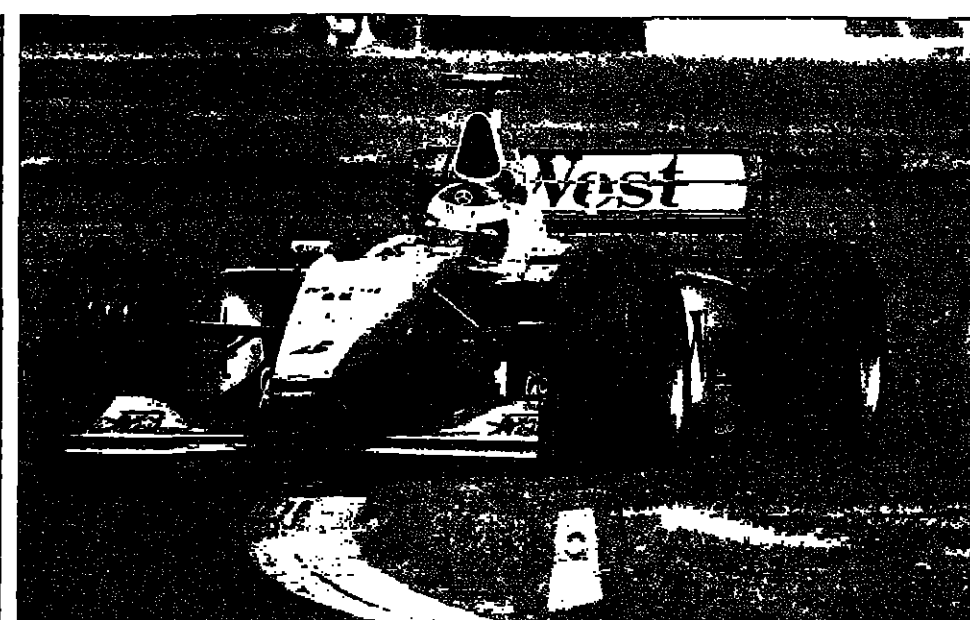


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♦ K 10 7 6 2
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1C Pass 1A Pass
2C Pass 2A Pass
3C Pass 3A Pass
4NT Pass
Opening lead: Three of ♠

The truly great players are not those who occasionally come up with a flashy line that makes the bridge columns. They have the talent to make those plays, too, but the real proof of their ability is finding those elusive lines to secure seemingly simple contracts. When this hand was played in a



McLaren driver Mika Hakkinen struggles to regain control of his car during the qualifying session at the Australian Grand Prix on the Albert Park circuit. Hakkinen the defending world champion qualified fastest with teammate David Coulthard second, and Germany's Michael Schumacher in a Ferrari, third (Reuters photo)

Hakkinen swoops to deny Coulthard pole position

MELBOURNE (AFP) — Mika Hakkinen swooped at the death Saturday to snatch pole position from teammate David Coulthard for Sunday's season-opening Australian Formula One race here. The world drivers' champion looked set to miss out when McLaren colleague Coulthard nipped in under his time leaving Hakkinen with only one lap to reply. Showing the steel that made him world champion, the 30-year-old Finn hurtled around the 3.294 mile (5.302 kilometre) Albert Park street circuit in one minute 30.462 seconds. That shaved 0.484 seconds off Coulthard's time after a combination of traffic backlog and time cost the gentlemanly Scot the opportunity of completing his last of 12 qualifying laps.

It was Hakkinen's second consecutive Melbourne pole and the 11th in his 113th GP start and McLaren's 93rd. "I was lucky that I was able to start my fastest and final lap just before the flag dropped," said Hakkinen. "It was a close fight with David and it's good to know that he will start the race alongside me from the front row."

"We have a comfortable gap, but that is qualifying and you never know what the race will bring." Coulthard could barely hide his disappointment at having to sit and watch Hakkinen again take the honours after last year's controversial team arrangement requiring him to pull over two laps from home

while leading the Australian GP to allow Hakkinen to win. "I was surprised that Mika managed another lap just before the flag came out to take pole from me at the very last moment and of course I am disappointed not to have been able to make use of my final lap due to traffic," said Coulthard. McLaren, last season's champion team, will have both of their drivers on the front row of the grid, followed by Ferrari's Michael Schumacher (1:31.781) and Stewart Ford's Rubens Barrichello (1:32.148) on the second row. It is the same first three on the grid as in last year's Australian GP, won by Hakkinen, on his way to winning his first drivers' championship.

The McLarens hold a minimum one-second advantage per lap on their rivals, Ferrari, and barring any mishap during the 58-lap Melbourne race have a strong chance of coming away from Australia with maximum drivers' and constructors' points. "It is good to be up at the front of the grid and I think our car is reliable and will be able to finish up near the front," said Frenzen.

Irvine conceded that it will be hard for Ferrari to match the tearaway McLarens. "Because I have done so little running in the new car before the season, this weekend is something of a test session for me," said the Irishman. Ferrari again experienced handling and set-up problems with Schumacher

downbeat about his chances of breaking through for his first Australian win at the ninth attempt. "We have encountered some problems with our car, which we had not encountered during winter testing," the German said. "We know which areas we have to work on before the next race to unlock the potential and we have concentrated on the car's reliability and that is a crucial factor for tomorrow's race." Stewart Ford were ecstatic over Barrichello's place on the second row, with the Brazilian saying: "This is a fantastic start to the season and it goes some way towards proving that our times over the winter were legitimately quick ... we have a very good chance of finishing in the points."

On the third row will be Jordan's Heinz-Harald Frentzen (1:32.276) and Ferrari's No.2 Eddie Irvine (1:32.289). "It is good to be up at the front of the grid and I think our car is reliable and will be able to finish up near the front," said Frentzen.

Irvine conceded that it will be hard for Ferrari to match the tearaway McLarens. "Because I have done so little running in the new car before the season, this weekend is something of a test session for me," said the Irishman. Ferrari again experienced handling and set-up problems with Schumacher

Agassi looks for 4th Scottsdale title

SCOTTSDALE (AFP) — Andre Agassi's run toward a fourth Scottsdale ATP Tour title continued Friday as he steamrolled Frenchman Cedric Pioline 6-4, 6-1 to reach the semi-finals. Agassi, bidding for his second straight title here — the fourth of his career — continued his solid performances at one of his favourite venues, a desert spot similar to his home of Las Vegas. "You get comfortable playing in certain places," said Agassi. "The crowd support has been wonderful."

The 28-year-old American was joined in the semi-finals by a pair of Australians at opposite ends of the tennis age spectrum. Veteran Mark Woodforde and teenaged Lleyton Hewitt, both from the south Australian capital of Adelaide, each advanced into the final four.

The 33-year-old Woodforde earned a 7-6 (8/6), 4-6, 6-1 upset of sixth seed Goran Ivanisevic. On Saturday he'll meet 18-year-old Hewitt, who advanced 6-1, 3-0 when ailing Frenchman Jerome Golmard retired.

"It was great out there today," said Hewitt, the World No. 91 who hasn't dropped a set all week. "In my mind, I felt like I couldn't miss a ball." The teenager lost only

two points on serve in the abbreviated 35-minute match. "I feel good," said Hewitt. "It will be a tough match. It's nice to get two Adelaide boys in the semi-finals. I'll hope to stay focused and play well. I'll take the matches one at a time."

Hewitt is appearing in his third career semifinal — and his first out of his hometown, when he won the Adelaide tour event in 1998 and went out in the final in January against Swede Thomas Enqvist. Woodforde proved to be the stronger as he wore down Ivanisevic, whose big-serving game can let him down as often as it helps him. Woody won the 10th meeting between the two left-handers after Ivanisevic had won four of the previous five encounters.

Woodforde's win guarantees an Australian in the final here for the third straight year. Mark Philippoussis won the title in 1997, and Jason Stoltenberg played the final in 1998 against Agassi. Woodforde and Ivanisevic have something of a history, with the Aussie losing an ill-tempered match at the U.S. Open, but earning revenge with a victory in Singapore a month later. "I was solid against Goran, and kept him away from net," said

Woodforde, ranked 65th. "I'm looking forward to playing Lleyton, it will be a totally different match from today. "He beat me in Adelaide in the second round, so there's a bit of revenge involved."

Agassi's form has been impeccable, with the former World No. 1 dropping only 11 games in his last three matches. In his last meeting with Pioline, a two-time Grand Slam finalist, Agassi handed the Frenchman his first career 6-0, 6-0 defeat.

In their only other meeting, Agassi won 6-4, 6-2 in the fourth round at key Biscayne in March, 1994. "If I'm playing well, I feel like I'm in control and comfortable," Agassi said.

The Las Vegas righthander improved his Scottsdale record to 19-3 and has reached the semi-finals for the fourth time. Each time Agassi has made it past the second round at the event, he has won it.

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